

NEBRASKA BASKETBALL TEAM SWEEPS KANSAS

Husker Illustrated

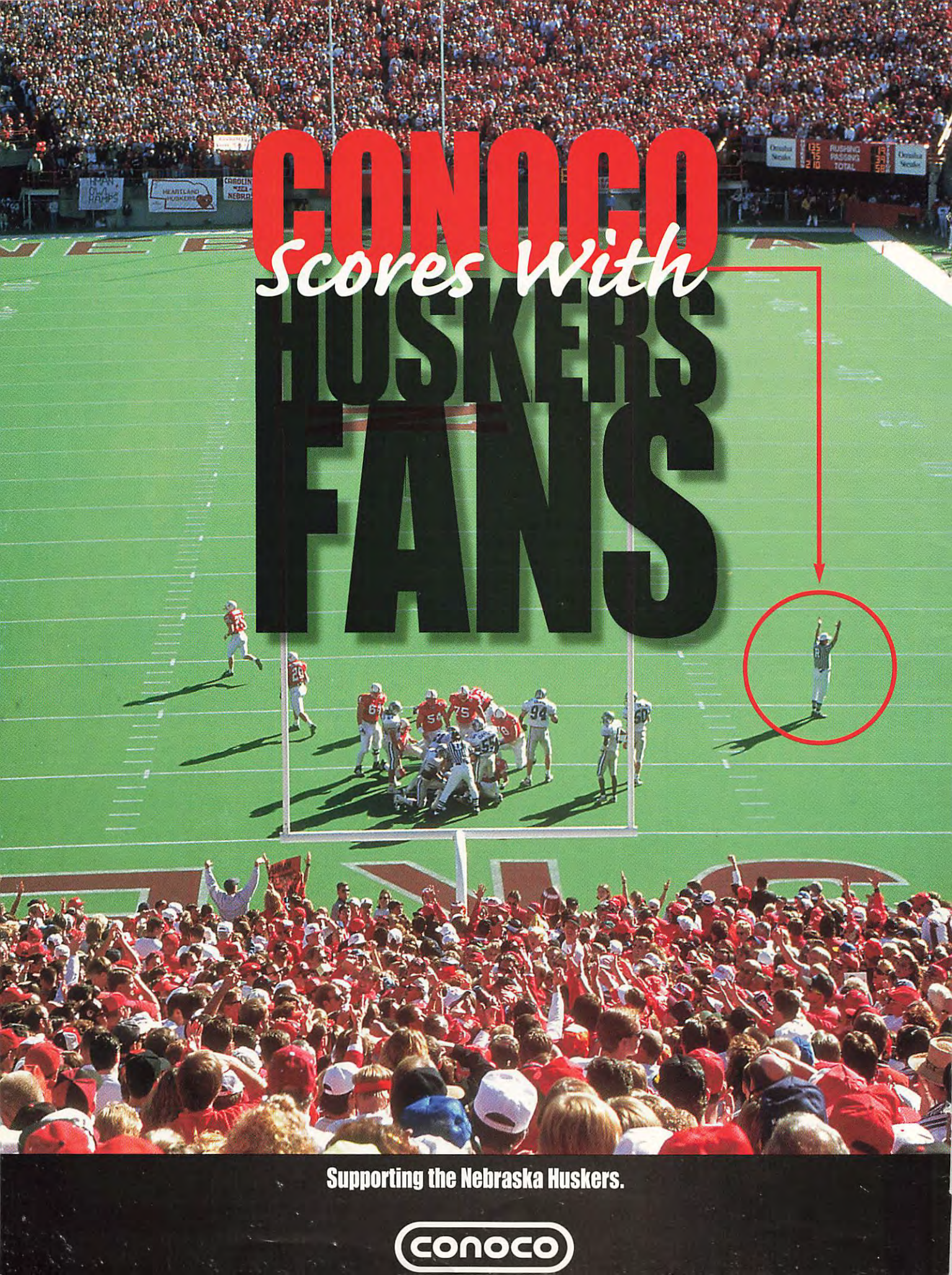
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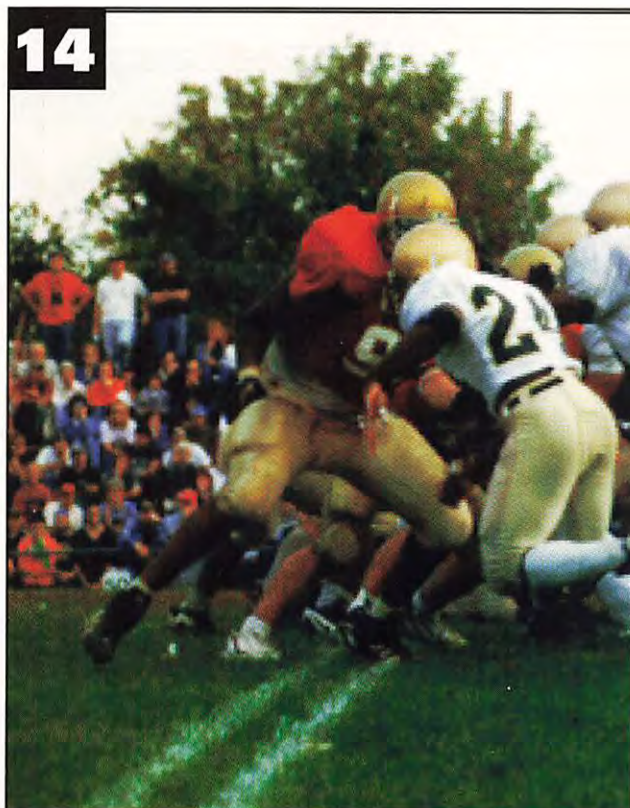
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Nebraska's 22-player recruiting class for 1999 included five players weighing more than 300 pounds. *By Mike Babcock*

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Junior guard Nicole Kubik is Nebraska's leading scorer, but her defensive play is just as important. *By Mike Babcock*

On The Cover

Fullback Judd Davies of Millard North High School was one of 22 recruits to sign letters of intent with Nebraska. *Photo by Scott Bruhn*

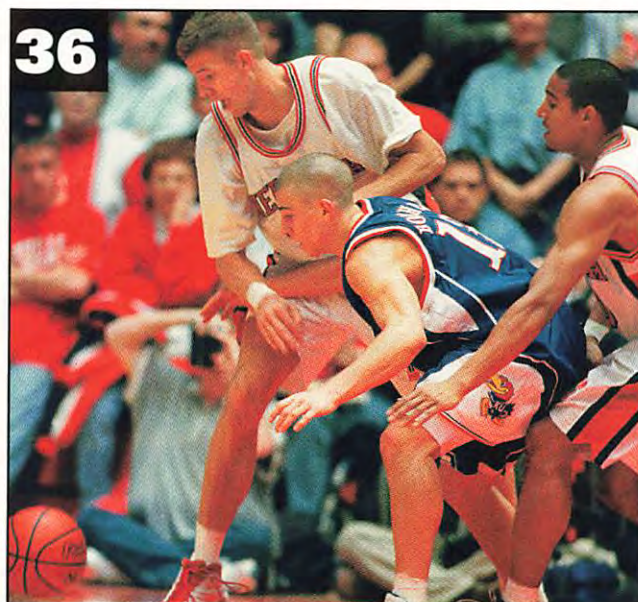
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Positive Contribution

Thank you for the excellent coverage you give Nebraska sports. I especially enjoy the positive articles about athletes and how their experience at Nebraska has helped them. The one area I would like to see is an article on the Academic All-Americans and how Nebraska's numbers exceed those of the Big 12 and the rest of the nation.

A number of the letters have been criticizing this year's football team. What they fail to consider is the number of injuries and the effect of a new coach. In his early years, Tom Osborne was heavily criticized for his play calling. At the end of a very successful career, he was an offensive genius. Give Frank Solich a chance before comparing him to Bob Devaney and Tom Osborne.

Nebraska athletics have made a positive contribution to the lives of thousands of young men and women. Academics are emphasized, as evidenced by the fact that Nebraska leads the nation in Academic All-Americans in both football and all sports. That achievement is grossly underappreciated in the sports world.

Running a clean program, having professional coaches and contributing to the personal, academic and spiritual well-being of our youth far outweigh wins and losses. Let's not lose our perspective of what is really important.

Lloyd Fread
Westminster, Colo.

It Wasn't The Coach

The reality of the 1998 season is that Tom Osborne probably would have lost at least three games as well. The offensive line was inexperienced, numerous injuries caught up with the ability to have any consistency, and the Big 12 had a strong year. How many teams in the country could plug in a third string quarterback and win games? Not many.

You can't go undefeated and win the whole ball of wax every year, although it would be nice.

Rick Pinterich
Berwick, Pa.

London No. 2 QB?

I see a lot of discussion on whether the season might or might not have been better had Tom Osborne stayed on. To me, the biggest factor was the complete waste

of Frankie London's talents. Frankie London should have stayed in as the No. 2 quarterback behind Bobby Newcombe. When Newcombe went down, we would have had a great talent ready to step in. I just can't help but think NU would have gone more like 12-1 or 11-2 with London at quarterback instead of the strange rotation of un-inspiring redshirt freshman Crouch, who by the way has a less than 50 percent completion percentage) and the gutsy but un-inspiring Monte Christo.

Dennis Caauwe
Overland Park, Kan.

Snyder Figured It Out

In September of 1996, the "sage of Arizona," coach Bruce Snyder, told coaches from Florida to Washington how to play Nebraska: "Make the quarterback beat you."

The message was received and taken seriously most places. Two places where it had little coaching impact were Lincoln, Neb., and Seattle, Wash.

Ed VanSteenburg
Santa Ana, Calif.

Wait Until Next Year

I was proud of Eric Crouch in the Holiday Bowl. The line did a good job protecting him, but they were not blocking like a Nebraska team for the runners.

One of my friends asked what happened to my team, and I said "Just wait until next year." They were not great this year, but with a little work, they can be ready to seek another title.

Merlin W. Merrill
Ruston, La.

Solich's First Year OK

I would like to congratulate Coach Solich on his first season as head coach. We all remember how Osborne's first years went and how everyone wanted everything from his job to his head. I think we as fans sometimes feel we had a losing season without 13 wins.

Skip Smith
Salton City, Calif.



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EDITOR,
GENERAL MANAGER
Brian Hill

CONTRIBUTING EDITOR
Mike Babcock

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS
Mark Derowitsch, James Hale,
Steve Sipple, Curt McKeever, Bill
Doleman, Todd Henrichs,
Nebraska Sports Information
Office

CONTRIBUTING
PHOTOGRAPHERS
Scott Bruhn, Doug DeVoe, Jon
Waller, Ryan Soderlin, Nebraska
Sports Information Office

SPORTS MARKETING
& ADVERTISING DIRECTOR
Jeff Tudor
For Advertising Information Call:
(402) 423-3405

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HI Online

<http://www.superhusker.com>

E-Mail Addresses

Editor: Hleditor@aol.com
Advertising/marketing: jtuder@navix.net

Got Something To Say?

Please send your comments and questions to: Letters, 3210 NW 3rd St., Lincoln, Neb. 68521. You can also fax them to us at (402) 474-5132. We reserve the right to edit the letters for clarity, content and length. For those with electronic mail abilities, Hleditor@aol.com.

Only A Test

Larry Henderson wasn't disappointed, exactly. But his 40-yard dash time left something to be desired, from his point of view anyway. "I just wanted to come out and pretty much hit around a time I'm used to running, which is a consistent 4.3 (seconds)," Henderson said.

Instead, his 40 time was 4.56 seconds, well off his personal best of 4.28.

Even so, the transfer wide receiver from West Los Angeles Community College was the fastest of those who participated in the Nebraska football team's pre-winter conditioning tests.

Following the testing, Boyd Epley, the director of athletic performance, included Henderson among the "good young players that people are going to want to know more about."

The 6-foot-2, 185-pound Henderson, a member of this year's scholarship recruiting class, had arrived two weeks earlier, enrolling for second semester and immediately joining the track and field team — as a sprinter, of course. "I kind of had to hit the ground with my feet rolling," he said.

Overall, the testing results weren't extraordinary. But that's to be expected prior to winter conditioning, which will conclude with post-testing on March 10. Spring practice begins March 22.

"We have a lot of potential here," said Epley. "There were some players who made personal bests in every category. There also were some players who didn't do real well in any of their four categories. So we've got some work to do. But we always do. I don't see anything alarming."

The greatest concern was that not everyone will be able to participate in winter conditioning. Among those recovering from surgeries are quarterback Bobby Newcombe (knee), I-back DeAngelo Evans (knee), rover Joe Walker (knee) and weakside line-backer Eric Johnson (shoulder).

"It's frustrating for us because when an athlete is injured, he's not able to participate in the (winter conditioning) program," Epley said. "So we're relying on our medical staff to get the injured players back to the path where they'll have a chance to realize the benefits of the program."

Participation is the key to winter conditioning. It's not a matter of working harder.

"We have a tremendous work ethic here at the University of Nebraska," said Epley. "How do you work harder? You try to make sure there aren't any absences so



Rush ends Kyle Vanden Bosch (left) and Chris Kelsay were the leaders in the performance index.

that everyone is able to realize the benefits of the program. There aren't that many workout sessions, and so when you miss one or miss two or miss four, you don't make the same progress that someone does who participates.

"So that's what we're after. By saying we want to work harder, we want to make sure we have no absences, if possible. If everyone will do that, they'll realize the benefits."

"You can't really work harder because there's such a thing as overtraining. So we're talking about getting the job done, not necessarily doing more work, doing more reps or more sets or more gains."

Rush end Kyle Vanden Bosch, a junior-to-be, scored consistently well in the four tests and finished as the leader in the performance index with 2,698 points. Chris Kelsay, also a rush end and the brother of former Cornhusker Chad Kelsay, was second on the performance index, with 2,574 points.

Linebacker Rod Baker was third, with 2,572 points.

The performance index is based on athletes' test results, with their size factored in.

The winter conditioning program provides an opportunity to develop lean body mass, according to Epley, and "it's not just with the offensive line," he said.

"We need to build strength across the board, at all positions.

Pre-Winter Conditioning Test Leaders

10-yard dash		Pro-agility run	
Eric Crouch, QB	1.56	Paul Kosch, WR	3.82
DeAntae Grixby, IB	1.56	Brian Shaw, LB	3.83
Ralph Brown, DB	1.58	Jeremy Bender, WR	3.93
Josh Kohl, LB	1.59	Pro-agility run points	
Steve Raymond, LB	1.59	Shaw	799
Tyler Rauenzahn, IB	1.59	Vanden Bosch	777
10-yard dash points		Chris Kelsay, RE	766
Aaron Golliday, TE	733	Vertical jump (inches)	
Kyle Vanden Bosch, RE	694	Sean Applegate, WR	35
Rod Baker, LB	694	Josh Anderson, DB	35
Dominic Raiola, OL	656	John Gibson, WR	35
40-yard dash		Shaw	35
Larry Henderson, WR	4.56	Baker	35
Rauenzahn	4.57	Correll Buckhalter, IB	34.5
Wes Woodward, DB	4.58	Jay Runty, QB	34.5
40-yard dash points		Vertical jump points	
Henderson	675	Baker	625
Rauenzahn	675	Buckhalter	602
Vanden Bosch	666	Shaw	602
Ben Kingston, FB	656	Damien Bauman, TE	583
Performance index			
Kyle Vanden Bosch, Rush End		2,698	
Chris Kelsay, Rush End		2,574	
Rod Baker, Linebacker		2,572	

So that's our focus, to build lean body mass. Then we'll add some speed and agility drills as we move along, to try to get them ready for spring football. But the first order of the day is to build some strength, that foundation."

Winter conditioning is "really like building a house," he said.

"You have to have a good, strong foundation if your house is going to withstand much of a wind. A big storm comes along, it's going to blow right over. So this is a very important time.

"If we don't get this done right, it really does affect the season. I think we saw that this last year with a few of the athletes who were injured and were unable to lay the good foundation."

Those who were able to participate in pre-winter conditioning tests were enthusiastic. No surprise there, according to Epley. "I think there is a lot of good about Nebraska, great leadership from our seniors, normally, a work ethic that many coaches marvel at when they come in and visit," he said.

"It's just a few little things that hold us back from winning a game or not winning a game. Attitude is one of those things. I don't think that's our problem. We have good, hard-working athletes. I think we ran into an injury bug that we have not seen in years and years around here (last season)." ■

1999 Schedule

Sept. 4	@ Iowa
Sept. 11	California
Sept. 18	So. Mississippi
Sept. 25	@ Missouri
Oct. 2	Oklahoma State
Oct. 9	Iowa State
Oct. 23	@ Texas
Oct. 30	@ Kansas
Nov. 6	Texas A&M
Nov. 13	Kansas State
Nov. 26	@ Colorado

QUICK HITS

What's Happening In Nebraska Football?

IT'S OFFICIAL: JOHNSON GETS EXTRA YEAR

It's official. Weakside linebacker Eric Johnson has been granted a fourth season of eligibility and will be a senior next season. Although Johnson, who came to Nebraska as a partial academic qualifier, was listed as a junior this season, the NCAA process wasn't complete until late January.

Wingback Shevin Wiggins also applied for an additional season, but his situation was enough different that Nebraska had to seek a special ruling, Al Papik told the Lincoln Journal Star. Papik is Nebraska's senior associate athletic director for compliance.

The NCAA had yet to rule on Wiggins' request at press time.

FRAZIER JOINS EX-HUSKER ASSISTANT STEELE AT BAYLOR

Former Cornhusker quarterback Tommie Frazier has joined the staff of new Baylor head coach Kevin Steele as a graduate assistant. He will work with the Bears' quarterbacks.

Steele, who coached Nebraska's linebackers before leaving for the NFL's Carolina Panthers, recruited Frazier out of Bradenton, Fla., while he was a Cornhusker assistant.

EVANS HAS ARTHROSCOPIC SURGERY ON KNEE

I-back DeAngelo Evans underwent arthroscopic surgery on his left knee in January. Evans suffered a cartilage tear in the knee last August and missed the first three games because of it.

I-BACK WHITE LEAVES PROGRAM

I-back Dan White, who saw limited action as a redshirted freshman last season, didn't return to Nebraska for second semester. Coach Frank Solich said White, a scholarship recruit from Green Bay, Wis., planned to transfer to a school at which he would be immediately eligible in the fall.

BOHL REPORTEDLY INTERVIEWS AT OREGON STATE

The Associated Press reported that Cornhusker linebackers coach Craig Bohl interviewed for the head coaching vacancy at Oregon State, following the departure of Mike Riley, who became the head coach of the NFL's San Diego Chargers. Oregon State hired Dennis Erickson.

SAN JOSE STATE ON FUTURE SCHEDULES

Nebraska has found replacement opponents for Texas Christian University on its 2000 and 2001 schedules. San Jose State agreed to play the Cornhuskers at Lincoln on Sept. 2, 2000. And Nebraska would travel to Pittsburgh for a game on Sept. 1, 2001, if the Panthers are able to move another game on their schedule.

Pittsburgh would then come to Nebraska for a game on Sept. 21, 2002. Former Cornhusker recruiting coordinator and administrative assistant Steve Pederson is the athletic director at Pittsburgh.

Nebraska also has added games with Southern California for the 2006 and 2007 seasons. The Cornhuskers would travel to Los Angeles in 2006, then USC would come to Lincoln in 2007.

CHRISTO, MAKOVICKA, KELSAY HONORED

Senior quarterback Monte Christo from Kearney, Neb., was chosen as the Tom Novak Trophy winner. Senior fullback Joel Makovicka from Ulysses, Ne., was chosen as the Guy Chamberlin Trophy winner. And senior rush end Chad Kelsay from Auburn, Neb., received the Native Son Award.

The awards were presented at the Outland Trophy banquet in Omaha on Jan. 11.

NEBRASKA MAKES EARLY OFFER TO TIGHT END

Chris Septak, a junior at Omaha's Millard West High School, has been offered a football scholarship by Nebraska, the Omaha World-Herald reported in mid-January.

Septak is a 6-foot-5, 235-pound tight end who played on Millard West's Class A state championship runnerup in 1998, setting a Class A record by catching 16 touchdown passes. Septak hasn't made an oral commitment to Nebraska and couldn't sign a letter of intent until February of 2000. ■

A Not-So-Typical Basketball Season

Cornhuskers come to life in a big way after 0-2 start in Big 12



Brian Hill

A GENTLEMAN was introduced to me at a local restaurant and immediately brought up Nebraska basketball.

"I was listening to the basketball game on the Kansas State station on the way up here, and they said this was a typical, schizophrenic, Danny Nee team," the man said.

That's probably an unfortunate choice of words, using a term associated with psychotic disorders, but you get the picture. From the way he said it, I assumed the man agreed with the negative assessment, and those feelings were not uncommon even in Nebraska some three weeks ago.

But, a funny thing happened on the way to the (maybe) NIT. This team suddenly broke the mold and looked more like one of those teams that seem to be on Sports Center every night.

The seemingly overnight metamorphosis included drastically improved execution on the offensive end to go with a sometimes stifling defense that had been overshadowed by the other problems.

This team, which lost by 37 points to Wisconsin and at home to Tulsa, before starting 0-2 in the Big 12 Conference, suddenly found itself.

It probably wasn't as sudden as it seemed. It just took some time to find an identity after the early departure of Tyrone Lue for the NBA. The four returning starters, who had been able to play supporting roles, had to step up and make this their team.

They have. Even those who don't want to credit coaching have to believe that this team got the message.

Senior center Venson Hamilton, who struggled early, won back-to-back conference player of the week honors and seemed to score and rebound in double figures every time out. Junior guard Cookie Belcher and senior forward Larry Florence spearheaded a trapping defense that turned steals into points. And senior forward Andy Markowski was a warrior through injuries and serving as Hamilton's backup in the middle.

Nee also gave redshirt freshman Cary Cochran a significant role, as an alternate at point guard with starter Joe Holmes. And senior Troy Piatkowski, sophomore

Chad Johnson and freshman Louis Truscott received more playing time to give the Cornhuskers a nice nine-man rotation.

Basketball became fun again, not just for the players, but the fans. Winning has a way of doing that.

After the 0-2 start, Nebraska won eight of its next nine games, all in conference play, including four straight against rated teams — Oklahoma, Missouri and perennial power Kansas twice. Yes twice.

Suddenly, this Nebraska team that many doubted and others ignored, was one game behind league-leading Texas with two weeks to go in the regular season.

Contributing editor Mike Babcock takes a look at the significance of that rare sweep of the Jayhawks in this issue. Mike has seen and written about many of the great wins in the series.

In the midst of this basketball juggernaut, we haven't forgotten about football. The Nebraska recruiting class was downgraded by some of the so-called experts, but what's new?

The recruiting classes that helped produce three national championships in four seasons weren't necessarily that highly regarded either. As Frank Solich said at his signing day news conference, "If that was all there was to it, we wouldn't have to play the games. We could just award the national championship to the team that gets the best recruiting class."

That would be Texas, according to the experts, whose class includes quarterback Chris Simms, son of former New York Giant and CBS announcer Phil Simms. The younger Simms first committed to Tennessee, then changed his mind and chose the Longhorns.

That's only one example of the moves and changes coaches and athletes go through during the annual talent search. You'll find several stories and columns on the recruiting process, as well as capsule looks at Nebraska's 22-player Class of 1999.

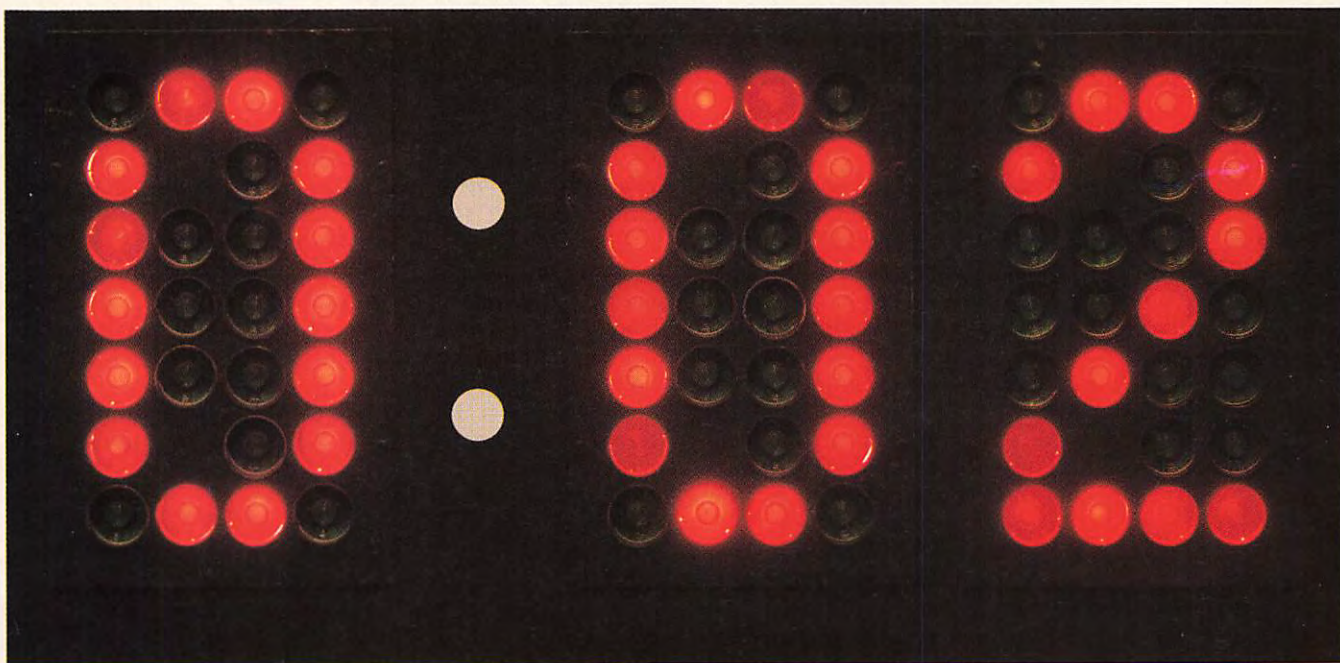
The latest class is signed, and spring practice starts March 22, with the annual Spring Game scheduled for April 17.

But it's basketball season now, and let's enjoy a fine run to the Big Dance. ■



Coach Danny Nee's Cornhuskers put on a surprising run to move into contention in the Big 12 Conference.

WHEN EVERYTHING'S ON THE LINE,
WHO DO YOU COUNT ON?



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19-Year-Old Gets Dose Of Reality

To injured quarterback Bobby Newcombe, it must seem that his football life is no longer his own



**Mike
BABCOCK**

BOBBY NEWCOMBE won't celebrate his 20th birthday until early August. It's easy to forget he's still a teenager, with a youthful idealism — which is beginning to erode.

Being the focus of attention will do that, as Newcombe is finding out.

When he arrived at Nebraska in the fall of 1997, he was accommodating, to a fault. That's how it is with most young athletes. They're eager to please everyone, not just their coaches.

The soft-spoken Newcombe was no exception. He had a ready smile and a willingness to answer any questions posed of him. The attention was flattering, without seeming intrusive.

Newcombe was the most publicized player in his scholarship recruiting class. He was a Parade high school All-American. He was the first football recruit to make an oral commitment, announcing his intention to attend Nebraska in the summer of 1996. And he played quarterback.

To top it off, the interest in him was intensified by the fact that he was from an exotic place, by Cornhusker recruiting standards, Albuquerque, N.M. Linebacker Chris Gustafson, also a member of the 1997 recruiting class was from Gallup, N.M. Before that, however, Nebraska hadn't had a scholarship football recruit from New Mexico since 1978, when Phil Trent came from Albuquerque.

Trent, a defensive back, never earned a letter. Gustafson is still included on the roster. He'll be a sophomore in the fall. But he's currently near the bottom of the depth chart.

Cornhusker fans were familiar with Gustafson two years ago. But after he arrived on campus in the fall of 1997, he slipped into red-shirt anonymity from which he has yet to emerge.

Gustafson, like most who are relegated to redshirt status as freshmen, quickly learned how fickle fans can be. A scholarship recruit's celebrity status can be short-lived. Ironically, Newcombe seems to have come to a similar realization, even though his career has gone the opposite direction.

"I still think everyone has a good side to them, but there's a reality that kicks in when you're not the superstar on the field that they perceive you to be," a somewhat disillusioned Newcombe told the Omaha World-Herald and the Lincoln Journal Star during an interview in mid-January.

Newcombe wasn't the superstar Nebraska fans expected him to be last season because of a knee injury suffered late in the third quarter of the opening game against Louisiana Tech.

He tried to come back and play, despite being bothered by soreness and swelling in the knee. When rest didn't help,

he elected to undergo surgery at the Alabama Sports Medicine Clinic in Birmingham, Ala. The surgery, performed on Dec. 7, will keep Newcombe on the sideline for spring practice.

Some who had showered Newcombe with affection during a freshman season in which he was moved to wingback and earned comparisons with former Cornhusker Heisman Trophy winner Johnny Rodgers questioned his commitment as a sophomore, before learning the extent of his knee injury.

Instead of trying to understand the frustration of an intensely competitive 19-year-old athlete hampered by an injury, a few of those fans apparently became critical of him.

Newcombe has referred to disparaging remarks directed at him in letters and on the internet, as well as from a handful of teammates, in explaining his change of attitude this season.

"I got a dose of reality after the injury as far as looking at other people and their views about you," he said during the interview with the Omaha and Lincoln newspapers.

That reality has included talk of his transferring to another school and speculation he would return to wingback next season because he has fallen behind in competition at quarterback.

It must seem to Newcombe that his football life is no longer his own.

He can take some consolation in recent history, however. Scott Frost went through even more difficult times, with overt criticism to the point that he was booed at Memorial Stadium. And Tommie Frazier grew so weary of demands on his time that he was considered difficult to deal with, aloof.

This isn't just a recent problem, by the way. Heisman Trophy winner Mike Rozier was so beleaguered by interview requests by the time he was a senior that he tried to avoid reporters.

Some misinterpreted his actions and took offense. But there have been few Cornhuskers more engaging than Rozier, who was shy and didn't enjoy being the center of attention.

Frost, Frazier and Rozier are remembered with affection by most Nebraska fans because their ability and their singularity of purpose enabled them to be extraordinarily successful. For the most part, there were no personal connections, though, of course, in an ideal world there would be.

Newcombe is learning that. He's learning that adults don't always act like adults when it comes to their expectations of college athletes. And he's learning that an athlete's first responsibility is to his team and then to himself. He represents Nebraska, and by doing so Cornhusker fans.

But he doesn't owe them much more than that. ■



Bobby Newcombe will be on the sideline for spring practice after knee surgery on Dec. 7.

Few Sure Things In Recruiting Process

*The ones who are experts at it
are the ones who do it for a living*



**Bill
DOLEMAN**

OK, HUSKER FANS. You may now take down your Christmas trees, put the lights away and blow out the candles in the windows. The holidays are long gone and the recruiting season is finally over. The 20 to 25 packages for which you were hoping have been signed, sealed and delivered to you by Santa Solich, via fax or FedEx.

The future of Nebraska football comes in all shapes and sizes and 40-yard dash times. It hails from all parts of the country, and now Canada. Months, and in some cases years, of studying film, making phone calls and home visits and more phone calls have come to an end with a simple signature on a letter-of-intent. Can you imagine the relief felt by the college bound and the college coach when all of the I's are dotted and all of the T's are crossed, when the process is over and everything is official?

I wonder if stock in Maalox drops after signing day.

Recruiting is the lifeblood of collegiate athletics, and it's exciting to see who's going where and then to see them live up to their potential as student-athletes. I remember talking with former Husker assistant coach Kevin Steele, now the head coach at Baylor, about a particular player he was recruiting in the winter of 1992. He told me, "If we get his guy, let me tell you, we'll win two national championships."

The player was a quarterback from Florida named Tommie Frazier. And the rest is Husker history.

Sure there are the "can't miss" Tommie Fraziers of the world, but recruiting is still an inexact science, at best. The ones who are experts at it are the ones who do it for a living — the coaches — not the newsletter publishers who rank the schools and verbal commitments as if a spot in the Bowl Championship Series were on the line in mid-February.

Is there a crystal trophy that goes to the school that ends up ranked No. 1 in recruiting? If so, Notre Dame must have a separate wing in its hall of fame called the "What Might Have Been" room.

In addition to the Fighting Irish, the perennial powers in recruiting over the last 20 years have been Florida State, Tennessee, Michigan and Florida, among others. While each has won a national title on the field during that time, Nebraska has won three in the 1990s alone, with recruiting classes that weren't all that highly regarded. I always wondered where guys such as Terry Connealy, Cory Schlesinger and walkons such as Joel Makovicka and Jon Vedral were ranked by the analysts before they went on to win it all at

Nebraska. It seems to me that Tom Osborne and his staff were the best judges of talent. And, more importantly, they knew how to maximize the talent they brought to Nebraska.

Trev Alberts told the story on a radio show we did together that when he was a senior in high school, his father called a recruiting service and asked what his son needed to do to make one of those Blue Chip lists. He was told that he would need to apply and include a \$50 fee. No mention of game film.

If you talk to anyone who covers recruiting on a regular basis, they'll tell you that if Nebraska, Florida State, Tennessee, et. al, are in on a certain player, he seems to find his way onto a list somewhere, fee or not. Alberts, you'll

remember, was an unheralded late addition to the recruiting class of 1990, and I think you'll agree that he turned out OK. Most will, be it in the lineup or in the classroom or both.

Some scholarship recruits who were superstars in high school may only be role-players in college. But if they get involved in the community and get an education, it would seem as though it was a well-invested scholarship. Sometimes that's overlooked. But isn't that just as important?

Don't get me wrong. I enjoy following the recruiting process, and I remember being as excited as I could be when Nebraska landed a kid out of Texas named Turner Gill. He, like Alberts and so many others, turned out all right. But it takes time. There are very few freshman phenoms in college football.

Patience is the key. Coaches have to have it during the recruiting process and fans have to have it once the recruit arrives on campus.

Consider the fact that of last year's recruiting class of 21 signees, 18 sat out their first year at Nebraska and redshirted. A year ago, coaches and fans waited anxiously to find out what prized recruits they would get, only to read about them being relegated to scout-team duty. Out of sight, out of mind; they've kind of become a forgotten group. That's the way it's been done at Nebraska for some time now, and I think it's the way everyone should do it. Give each recruit a redshirt season to get acclimated to college life and college football before turning them loose on the field.

So as you look over the recruiting class of 1999 and study their stats and the potential they'll bring to Lincoln, do so with a little patience. In the meantime, dust off last year's list of recruits and remember how excited you were when those future Huskers signed on the dotted line.

Their time has finally come. ■



**There are few recruits in
the "can't miss" category
of Tommie Frazier.**

Bill Doleman's face is familiar to Cornhusker fans. He is host for several Nebraska-related television programs including the "Husker Show" and coaches' shows for Terry Pettit, Paul Sanderford and Frank Solich.

In Recruiting, Time Will Tell

Texas, Texas A&M don't have to go far to find blue-chip prospects



Curt McKEEVER

SO YOU THINK your football team had another banner recruiting season, right?

There's plenty of blue-chippers, all who stand as tall and weigh as much as they say, and can live up to that spectacular 40-yard dash time (in full pads, of course — after all, we're not talking track here).

Well, get back to me on that in a couple of years. In the meantime, here's something to chew on.

Let's say your team has a class of 24 players. In general, half of those, for a variety of reasons, won't pan out. Now you're down to 12, and of those, maybe half will end up as starters.

Hmmm. Seems like you'd expect a better on-target rate than 25 percent, but whoever said college football recruiting is an exact science.

Of the 191 players that Nebraska signed to letters of intent from 1989 to 1997, 47 never played enough to earn a letter. If that trend holds, then 11 of the 43 players who made up the Huskers' 1998 and 99 recruiting classes will end up in the same boat.

"I always look at recruiting as grown men chasing 17- and 18-year-old young men who have no clue what they want to do with their lives," Nebraska quarterbacks coach Turner Gill told the Omaha World-Herald . . . "All of a sudden, they have men coming from all over the country to tell them how great their institution is, and they're forced to piece it all together in a very short period of time."

Maybe that's why football recruiting ought to be viewed on the same level as Hollywood gossip — it's fun to follow, but not to be taken too seriously.

As Berry Tramel of the Daily Oklahoman wrote: If recruiting is relevant, why does Air Force keep winning with guys who can fit in cockpits? Recruiting rankings become legit the day a coach stands up and says, "Our class stinks."

Well, at least we know how Mr. Tramel feels about recruiting.

Personally, I like his way of thinking, but if those recruiting analysts didn't know a little something about high school football players, then why do so many college coaches subscribe to their services.

"People who say being No. 1 in recruiting doesn't mean anything, well, you'd rather be No. 1 than No. 50," Texas coach Mack Brown said. "That's a no-brainer."

Low and behold, Brown and his staff have put together a class that received that top billing by the three most-respected recruiting services. And 1998 Big 12 Conference champ Texas A&M wasn't far behind, getting no lower than a No. 6 ranking.

You don't have to look far to explain their successes. The Longhorns and Aggies got the majority of the best players from their home state.

Big deal, you say? Well, consider that last year, 32 players named to the coaches' all-Big 12 team came from Texas. The state with the next-highest representation of players was Missouri — with 10.

Of the Dallas Morning News' top 100 from Texas, 59 stayed at Division I-A schools within the state. That's just shy of the decade-high 60 in 1997. Last year marked a decade low of 44.

Texas signed 20 of the News' top 100 from the state, while A&M got 14.

"If we can continue to get the best players in the state," we'll win," Brown said. "This is the best class overall I've ever been associated with."

Texas was pushed into the top spot with the signing of quarterback Chris Simms, the son of former New York Giants quarterback Phil Simms who had first given Tennessee an oral commitment. Simms, the USA Today offensive player of the year, is still likely to learn from Major Applewhite, who was the Big 12 offensive newcomer of the year in 1998.

Another of the Longhorns' 28 signees is Cory Redding, a linebacker who was the USA Today's national defensive player of the year.

Texas brought just 35 players to campus to sign its class of 28, 23 of whom are Texans.

A&M's 27-player class was bolstered with the signing of Joe Weber, considered California's top running back. The Aggies also got two other highly touted runners and three defensive backs to help with the loss of three secondary starters.

Of course, the Longhorns' and Aggies' success during the season didn't hurt. Texas, having gone 4-7 in 1997, went 9-3 in Brown's first season (including a win at Nebraska and a Cotton Bowl triumph) and had the Heisman Trophy winner. A&M, which will return 16 starters, knocked off Kansas State in the Big 12 championship and gave Florida State and Ohio State tussles on national TV.

After Texas and A&M, the National Recruiting Advisor, Prep Football Report and Superprep Magazine all indicated there was a dropoff in the Big 12. Nebraska was considered to have the next-best class, followed by Missouri and Kansas State.

Of course, people's current feelings are always subject to "upon further review" a couple years down the road. ■



Mack Brown and his Texas staff put together the No. 1-rated recruiting class.

Curt McKeever is a sportswriter, covering the University of Nebraska for the Lincoln Journal Star. In addition to reporting on football he is the primary beat writer for the men's basketball and baseball teams.

Huskers Add Size

1999 recruiting class includes five players listed at more than 300 pounds

By Mike Babcock

Patrick Kabongo pretty much fills up the space in a normal-sized doorway.

When he came to Nebraska on a recruiting visit, some who saw him were "wondering what NFL player was on campus," said Chad Stanley, a Cornhusker football graduate assistant.

Kabongo stands 6-foot-6 and weighs 315 pounds. That's how he's listed on the release of Nebraska's 1999 scholarship recruits, anyway. And get this, he's also listed as a rush end.

"That's what Patrick would like to play," coach Frank Solich said with a smile. "And when you're 6-foot-6, 315 pounds, you can play wherever you want, I guess."

If size is the determining factor, then Dan Waldrop, another scholarship recruit, will be given his choice of positions, too. Waldrop is listed at 6-foot-5 and 320 pounds. And the thing is, "we feel (he) has room to grow," said Solich. "He can still put size on in the upper body."

Waldrop is projected as an offensive lineman.

Kabongo and Waldrop are the biggest in a Cornhusker recruiting class that includes three others listed at 300 or more pounds and another at 290 pounds. "Certainly the biggest need was to get some big people into the program," Solich said. "And I think that was accomplished."

The other 300-pounders also are projected to play in the offensive line, an area of significant need: Tim Green (6-foot-5, 305), Chris Loos (6-

foot-3, 300) and Toniu Fonoti (6-foot-4, 300).

Tamotu Tagoa'i, the 290-pounder, will be a defensive lineman.

Jon Dawson, another offensive lineman, is listed at 6-foot-3 and 285 pounds.

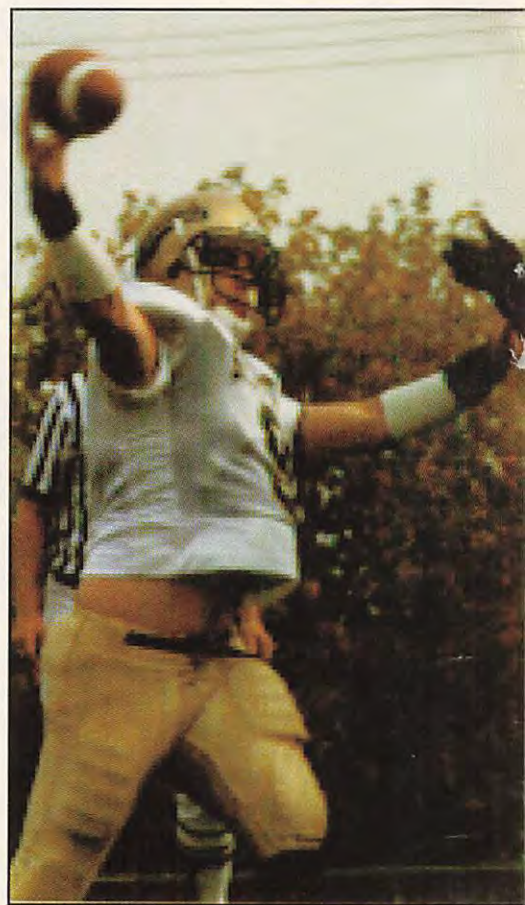
"If you look at what we were able to bring in in the offensive line and the defensive line, and even those guys listed as rush ends, you know the size, the strength — the athletic ability combined with size and strength — was there. That was, we felt, a big, big need for this program," said Solich.

Inconsistency in the offensive line was a factor in the Cornhuskers' first four-loss season in 30 years. In addition, the number of offensive linemen in the program has been diminished in recent seasons, for a variety of reasons, including injuries, transfers and academic problems.

Another recruiting emphasis was quarterback, where Nebraska has just two scholarship players, red-shirted freshman Eric Crouch and sophomore Bobby Newcombe.

Sophomore walkon Jay Runty is the only other quarterback of note.

If all goes well with standardized test scores and core curriculum grade-point averages — and there's no reason to think otherwise — they'll be joined in the fall by Carl



Crawford and Jammal Lord.

Quarterback is almost always a focus. The Cornhuskers didn't recruit a quarterback a year ago, however, and as a result, "you needed to be a little bit concerned (this year)," Solich said.

"As you well know, two may not be enough. We found that out this year. You can get caught in a situation where you have to have, certainly, a third guy ready. And we were nervous about having a fourth guy ready to play this past year. So that was a need. It is a concern.

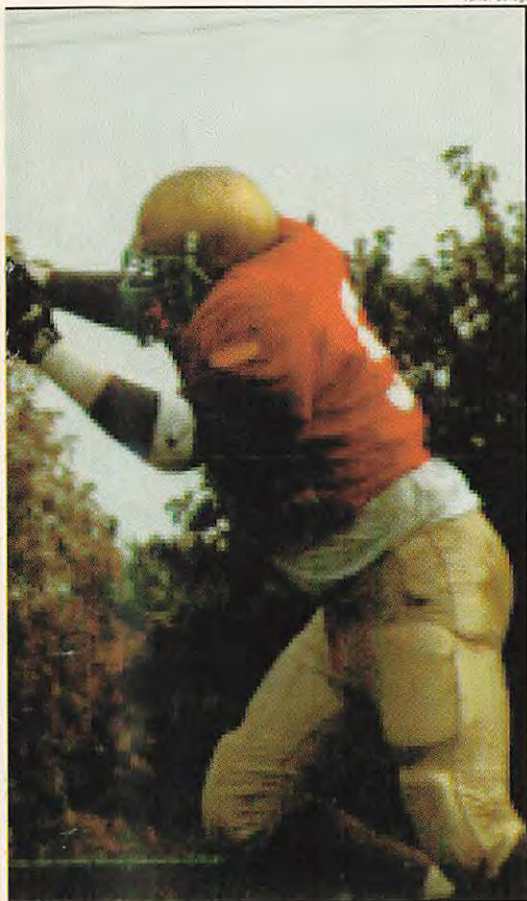
"We feel that the guys we have coming in at the quarterback spot have the ability to ease that concern. We'll see how it all plays out, but we need to develop a backup quarterback."

The opportunity is there to play without redshirting.

Lord is from Bayonne, N.J., the same high school from which former Cornhusker defensive back Ernie Beler came. Crawford is from Houston, the only Texan among this year's 22 recruits.

"Certainly, the biggest need was to get some big people into the program. And I think that was accomplished."

— Frank Solich



Patrick Kabongo (above right), listed at 6-foot-6 and 315 pounds, can be an imposing figure rushing the passer. He played football at Vanier College Prep in Montreal, Quebec.

"As far as the state of Texas is concerned, we felt we did get an outstanding one," Solich said. "We will continue to recruit Texas very hard. I think you will see that we will dedicate the time and effort to making it work down there. And I presume we will have success (in Texas) over a given time.

"Texas will be important to us."

The recruits come from 10 states, besides Nebraska, and Canada (Kabongo), with two from Hawaii. Fonoti and Tagoa'i will join highly regarded offensive lineman Dominic Raiola and redshirt linebacker Tony Tata, Hawaiians in the Cornhuskers' previous two scholarship recruiting classes.

Kabongo is the second Canadian recruit in as many years, following redshirt Dahrran Diedrick.

The Hawaiian and Canadian connections are a "good plus for us," said Solich.

"The feeling in those areas is that

this is a tremendous program and we're able to get visits. We're able to have players take a serious look at us, from Canada and from Hawaii."

None of the 22 recruits are from Florida, however, for the fourth year in a row. If wingback Shevin Wiggins isn't granted an additional season of eligibility by the NCAA, tight end Damien Bauman, a Central Florida transfer from Auburndale, would be the only Floridian on the roster.

But that's "not much of a concern," Solich said. "It is tremendously difficult to get players out of Florida. We were very close again on a number of players in Florida. But as you know, close doesn't count. I know what close is all about from this past season. It doesn't get it done."

Distance and weather are significant factors in recruiting Florida, and "our exposure down there is not as great as what it is in other parts of the country," he said. "It's not a major recruiting area, to the point we feel we have to pull three, four or five guys out of there in order for us to be successful."

As usual, in-state athletes are the foundation of the recruiting class. There are seven Nebraskans on the list, including four from Omaha — among them linebacker Blanchard Johnson III, who attends St. Albert High School across the Missouri River in Council Bluffs, Iowa.

It was an "excellent year for Nebraska players," said Solich. "As I look at the entire group, it was very easy to decide that each and every one of those guys was a schol-

arship player. We felt that in comparison to guys we looked at around the country, they were top-line players.

"So I think it's a very, very strong Nebraska (in-state) class."

Nebraska went out-of-state for running backs, however, and signed two, Robin Miller from Kent, Wash., and Josh Davis from Loveland, Colo. Davis, the son of former Cornhusker Tony Davis, was involved in an off-field incident in December, which could have further repercussions.

"Josh and his family . . . understand that he will be disciplined like any other player in our program who needs to have discipline applied," Solich said. "There's a definite understanding of that."

Whether or not disciplinary action is warranted remains to be determined.

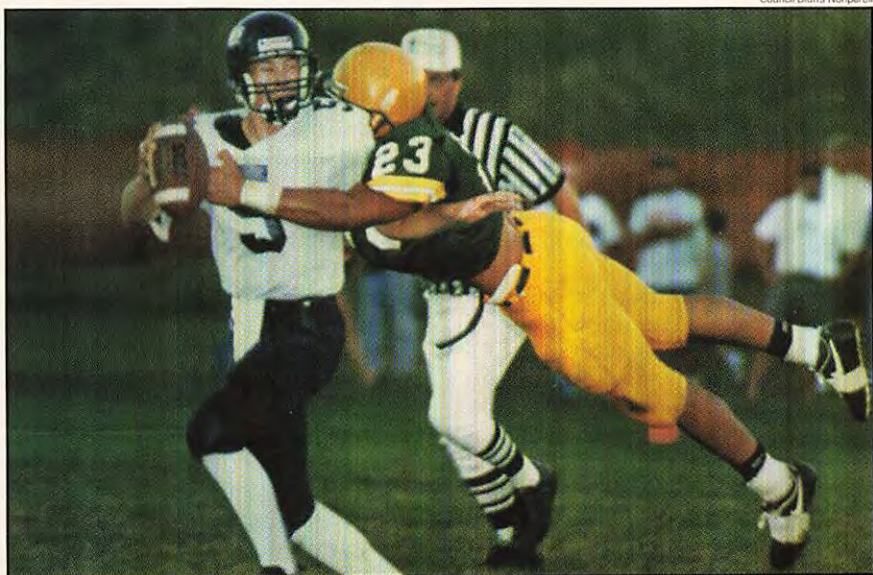
Nebraska's 9-4 record and loss against Arizona in the Holiday Bowl — after 17 consecutive trips to New Year's Day bowls — didn't adversely affect recruiting, according to Solich.

"No, not at all," he said. "I think Nebraska is still perceived out there to be a great program. I think the interest was tremendous. We had a lot of great, great athletes who visited campus.

"I think we got our fair share. Of course, we did not get them all. No one gets them all. But the interest was there, and we felt all-in-all, the recruiting process went well. The reception was very good."

From some extremely large players. ■

Council Bluffs Nonpareil



Linebacker recruit Blanchard Johnson III had nine quarterback sacks as a senior at Council Bluffs St. Albert.

Camps Part Of Process

Nebraska gets out of the gate fast with early recruiting commitments

By James Hale

The recruiting expectations were the same. Despite a rare four-loss season, there wasn't anybody in the country that doubted Nebraska would once again put together a top-10 recruiting class.

Granted, there was a new man in charge, but Frank Solich got his feet wet a year ago when Tom Osborne shocked the college football world by retiring in the middle of December.

However, Osborne stayed on throughout the recruiting season to help Solich in the transition. That fact helped the Cornhuskers once again land a recruiting class that was ranked in the top 15 in the country.

Still, many wondered just how the Cornhuskers would do with Osborne retired and no longer around to help the program. Plus, the Cornhuskers would be recruiting for the first time in years without a conference championship, with four losses on their record and no chance at a national championship.

Things were a little different, but the recruiting expectations were still high. The Huskers' recruiting procedure certainly hasn't changed. Veteran coaches, who year in and year out find players through their own evaluations, caring not what the national recruiting experts think, were still turning over every rock looking for that rare athlete to wear the Nebraska red.

Once again, the Huskers worked out more than 3,000 athletes at their

summer football camps, and many of the Huskers' early commitments came from those camps.

In-state, the Huskers were well on their way to dominating, as fullback Judd Davies of Millard North, offensive lineman Chris Loos of Lincoln Southeast and defensive lineman Phil Peetz of Elkhorn all committed in the summer and early September.

Davies was coming off major knee surgery, but was healthy enough that by the end of the year, he was regarded as the top fullback prospect in the country. Peetz played with a hurt shoulder all season, but was still dominant enough to earn Super-State honors. He had his shoulder surgically repaired immediately following the season. Loos played offense and defense and was the Huskers' second oral commitment back in the summer. He'll be an offensive lineman at Nebraska.

In the summer, the Cornhuskers also picked up their first out-of-state commitment in defensive back Rob Blomeier of Lititz (Manheim Township), Pa. Blomeier also went through the Nebraska football camp, and the Cornhusker coaches loved what they saw.

Blomeier is an option quarterback who battled through shoulder injuries most of the season. He missed the first six games and then moved to wide receiver and defensive back to protect the injury. Blomeier was offered early and didn't visit another school.



It wasn't long before defensive tackle Ryon Bingham of Sandy (Alta), Utah followed suit. It's not often the Cornhuskers go to Utah to sign a player, but Bingham was the player of the year in Utah and can run a 4.9 40-yard dash at 270 pounds.

Before the recruiting season had actually started, Nebraska was already out of the gate and recruiting well. Five early commitments for the Huskers, and some of the very best prep talent in the country was looking the Cornhuskers' way.

Quarterback had become a need position, and Nebraska started the fall in on three of the top five prep signal callers in the country. Chris Massey of Spiro, Okla., C.J. Leak of Charlotte (Independence), N.C., and Colby Freeman of Brownwood, Texas, all had set visits with Nebraska and all had the Cornhuskers ranked in their top three.

The Cornhuskers were also certainly in the running for California running back Joe Weber of San Bernardino Pacific, who was considering the Huskers along with USC, UCLA, Texas A&M, Washington and Washington State. Tight end



Darrin Naatjes of Inwood West Lyond, Iowa, was rated as one of the top 100 players in America, and was a pro baseball prospect to boot. In early September the Cornhuskers led Stanford, Tennessee and Arizona State. All-American offensive lineman Jeff Faine of Sanford Seminole, Fla., had his choices narrowed down to Notre Dame, Florida State and Nebraska.

The nation's top defensive end, Cole Pittman of Shreveport (Evangel), La., was a mid-semester graduate and would enroll at either Nebraska, Texas, LSU or Florida in early January.

The Cornhuskers also hoped to continue their recruiting in Canada and Hawaii. All-American linebacker Joe Siofele of Honolulu (St. Louis) had the Cornhuskers right in the mix along with Washington and Arizona.

It was another typical Nebraska recruiting year in progress. The Cornhuskers were cleaning up in-state, getting commitments early from athletes who attended their summer camp and cherry picking certain athletes across the country that Nebraska felt could fit its style of play.

A perfect example is All-American linebacker Shaun Coleman of Aurora (Regis Jesuit), Colo. Coleman was an option quarterback on the prep level. Since the Cornhuskers run the best option offense in the country, you would think they would love a guy 6-foot-4 and 210 pounds, with 4.4 speed, under center. However, Coleman says the Cornhuskers never talked to him about playing quarterback, and that was one of the things that drew him to commit early to Nebraska.

"I always figured that I would wind up on the defensive side of the ball anyway," Coleman said. "Option guys my size don't go to the pros as a quarterback so I wanted to move to defense, and Nebraska is the perfect place for me."

The Cornhuskers landed their second All-American player in just a matter of days in early September, when Josh Davis of Loveland, Colo., chose the Cornhuskers over the world. Davis, is the son of former Nebraska star Tony Davis and said he always knew that he would be following in his dad's footsteps at Nebraska.

SuperPrep All-American linebacker Shaun Coleman (above) was a 6-foot-4, 210-pound option quarterback at Aurora (Regis Jesuit), Colo., but said he likes the idea of playing defense at Nebraska.

"I didn't just pick Nebraska because my dad played there, but I do think that is great that he did," the younger Davis said. "Nebraska runs a great offense for running backs, and I feel I fit in perfectly with what they need at tailback."

Recently Davis was charged with burglary, and those charges are pending, but Davis signed with the Cornhuskers, and he believes he will be able to fulfill that scholarship commitment.

The state's leading tackler also made it known that he would stay home and play at Nebraska. Strong safety Taylor Gehman of Omaha Northwest led the state of Nebraska in tackles for two straight years and never really considered any other school.

Trevor Johnson of Lincoln Northeast was proving to be the state's top tight end prospect, and

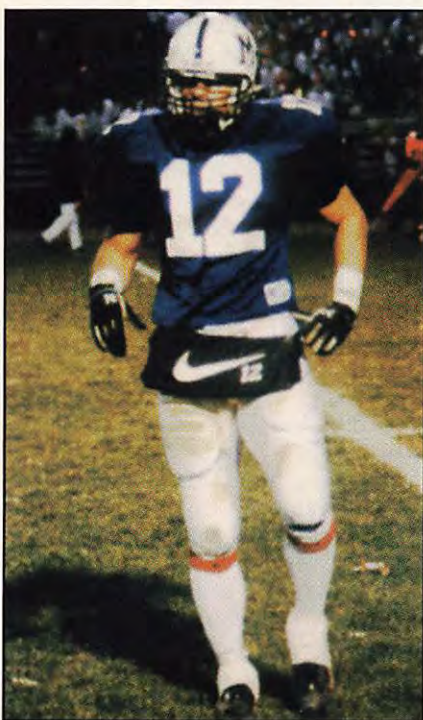
after watching Johnson play through September and early October, the Cornhuskers offered, and Johnson didn't hesitate to accept.

"As soon as Coach Solich called and said that I had a scholarship, I accepted immediately," Johnson said. "Every kid growing up in Nebraska wants to play for the Cornhuskers, and I am certainly no different."

Also in October, the Cornhuskers committed a pass rushing demon out of Carrollton, Mo. Spencer Owen was not a highly rated athlete at the start of the season, but the Cornhuskers loved what they saw at their football camp. Owen finished the last two seasons with 29 quarterback sacks and finished his career ranked as one of the top 30 players in the midlands.

The Cornhuskers also brought in two outstanding prospects at the end of October. Offensive lineman Shane Lehman of Corona, Calif., would wind up signing with UCLA, but running back/outside linebacker Robin Miller of Kent (Meridian), Wash., picked the Cornhuskers over Michigan and Arizona State.

"I was just blown away with the football tradition at Nebraska," Miller said. "I have always wanted to play somewhere where football is important to people, and Nebraska is that kind of place."



Rob Blomeier of Lititz, Pa., committed early after attending a Nebraska camp.



Eleven commitments before the start of November, and the Cornhuskers had at that time one of the top ten recruiting classes in the country. They also knew that soon they could add offensive line prospect Tim Green of Omaha Westside to the list. Green is the younger brother of Mike Green, who is already on the Cornhusker roster. The Cornhuskers were just waiting for Green to get his test score and then offered a scholarship.

Quarterback/athlete Carl Crawford of Houston (Davis), Texas, was also leaning heavily toward the Cornhuskers. Crawford was rated as one of the top 25 players in Texas and is considered a possible first round draft choice in baseball. If he goes to college, he wants to play both sports, which Nebraska agreed to let him do. Plus, the Cornhuskers were one program that wanted to give him a shot at quarterback. Crawford was also considering TCU, Texas A&M and Baylor.

In early December, the Cornhuskers learned that for the second straight year they were going to sign one of the elite players in

Canada, as Patrick Kabongo of Montreal (Vanier Prep) picked the Cornhuskers. Kabongo visited Nebraska Nov. 26th and was shown around by former Canadian star Dahrran Diedrick. That visit sold Kabongo on Nebraska over Boston College, Central Florida, Alabama, Florida State and Kentucky.

"I felt really comfortable with Nebraska and could tell the rest of the players there did, too," Kabongo said. "It's a great college and a super college football program."

In late December the Cornhuskers signed wide receiver Larry Henderson of West Los Angeles Community College. He enrolled for the second semester. Henderson is pure speed, with a 4.3 40 time and a 10.5 100 meters. He is already participating in track at Nebraska.

All-American defensive tackle John Garrison of Blue Springs, Mo., also announced that he would attend Nebraska over Missouri, Kansas State and Notre Dame.

The only real disappointment for the Cornhuskers heading into January was that they were striking out on the top quarterbacks in the



out on the top quarterbacks in the country. Freeman said that Nebraska was too far away from home and committed to Texas A&M, Massey also felt it was too far away from home and eventually committed to Oklahoma State. Leak was being very evasive, and the Cornhuskers couldn't narrow him down for a visit. The same was true for Latrez Harrison of Atlanta (Washington).

Crawford did commit, and that was huge, but the Cornhuskers knew they wanted to sign another quarterback. The Cornhuskers had earned a visit from Jammal Lord of Bayonne, N.J., in mid-December and felt they had a good chance to sign him. Lord wasn't as highly rated as the initial group of quarterbacks the Cornhuskers recruited but was an excellent prospect. In late January, it was a happy day in Lincoln when Lord picked the Cornhuskers over East Carolina, Iowa and Minnesota.

For linebacker Blanchard Johnson, who played his high school football at St. Albert High School in Council Bluffs, Iowa, but was born and lives in Omaha, it was

an easy decision to pick Nebraska over Iowa, Iowa State, Michigan and Wyoming.

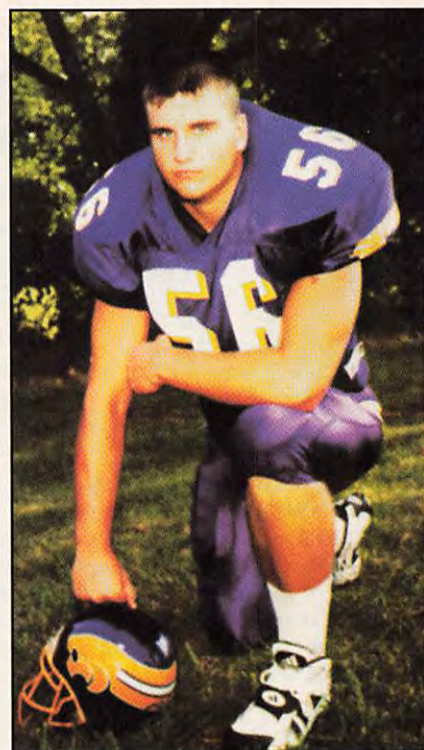
That left the Cornhuskers with some key national recruits as they headed down the stretch. Nebraska would strike gold in Hawaii but not for Siofele, who would sign with Arizona.

The Cornhuskers would sign his teammate Tamotu Tagoa'i, a 290-pound defensive tackle prospect, and offensive lineman Tonii Fonoti of Hauula (Kahuku), Hawaii, to make it a successful run in the islands.

Nebraska was also shocked when Naatjes decided that he could better his baseball/football career at Stanford. The strong Stanford baseball program was the deciding factor.

Faine would also turn down Nebraska's offer and head to Notre Dame. Weber would surprise many folks and sign with Texas A&M, while Leak shocked the recruiting world by signing with Wake Forest. Pittman would choose Texas.

The Cornhuskers did manage to pull off a surprise or two around

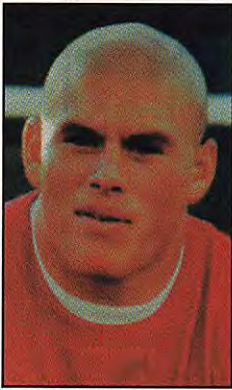


Nebraska pulled a pair of rush end candidates out of Missouri in Spencer Owen of Carrollton and John Garrison of Blue Springs. Owen (left) knocks the football loose from an opposing player. His statistics for his senior year included 16 sacks, six fumble recoveries and five blocked kicks. Garrison (above) won the Buck Buchanan Award as the best defensive lineman in the Kansas City metro area.

signing day. They convinced offensive lineman Dan Waldrop of Wilmington (Banning), Calif., to de-commit from Colorado and sign with Nebraska. They also landed the top player in Wyoming in offensive lineman Jon Dawson of Cheyenne Central.

Nebraska didn't close like it normally does. Losing Naatjes and Siofele and not signing the prime time quarterback prospect hurt the Cornhuskers' national ranking. However, the Cornhuskers have always recruited to the beat of their own drummer, and when the class is still ranked in the nation's top 20, Cornhuskers fans get the best of both worlds.

They get a recruiting class that the best coaching staff in the country feels is perfect for them and a class that the national pollsters believe is still good enough to be among the nation's top programs. ■



Ryon Bingham

Defensive Line
Sandy, Utah
(Alta)

Height: 6-3
Weight: 270
Speed: 4.9
DOB: June 6,
1981

TEAM'S 1998 RECORD: 9-2

DEFENSE RUN: 5-2 and 4-3 look

HONORS: Defensive Player of the Year (Salt Lake Tribune); All-State; Utah Player of the Year (Gatorade Circle of Champions); No. 6 defensive line prospect Big 12 Region (Prep Star)

OTHER SPORTS: Wrestling (heavyweight, 36-1 as a junior with 33 pins, state champion; currently ranked No. 1)

HOBBIES & INTERESTS: Lifting weights and talking with friends

CAPSULE: Bingham can bench 410 pounds and squat 530. He played nose guard and offensive tackle. On defense, Bingham had 87 tackles, with 14 sacks, four passes knocked down, five fumble caused and two fumbles recovered. Ryon's brother, Josh, is a freshman at Southern Utah.

HIGH SCHOOL COACH MITCH LUNAK:

"Ryon is a fantastic player and an even better athlete. We played him on both sides of the ball because we just couldn't afford to take him off the field. He's better on defense because he can run and because of his aggressive nature. I can honestly say that Ryon is the best player I have coached in 23 years."

FRANK SOLICH:

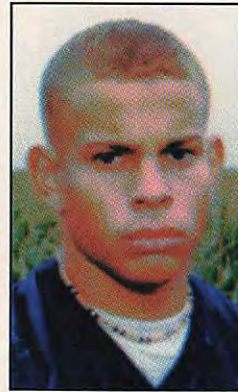
"Ryon's athleticism is the first thing that comes to mind. He's a very physical player but knows how to get leverage on defense due to his wrestling expertise. He is one of the most physical players that we have ever had come to our camp. Ryon is so good in wrestling that I believe that opponents are only averaging around 50 seconds on the mat with him."

WHY RYON CHOSE NEBRASKA:

"When you have an opportunity to go to school at one of the best football programs in the country, and they have everything you want out of a school, then you jump on it. I also love to lift weights, and Nebraska has the best weightlifting program in the country. If I can become the best player that I can be at Nebraska, then it's not going to happen for me. I also enjoyed the atmosphere at Nebraska when I went to their summer camp. It's not so much big city, and the people are very nice."

SELECTED NEBRASKA OVER: Only visited Nebraska, but had offers from UCLA, Florida, Iowa, Kentucky, Utah and BYU

Son of Lora and Jeff Bingham



Rob Blomeier

Defensive Back
Lititz, Pa.
(Manheim
Township)

Height: 5-11
Weight: 185
Speed: 4.5
DOB: Feb. 14,
1981

TEAM'S 1998 RECORD: 4-6

HONORS: All-American (SuperPrep); Honorable Mention All-American (USA Today); No. 7 prospect Eastern Region (Prep Star) Magazine

OTHER SPORTS: Baseball (centerfield, leadoff hitter who hit .360 and needs just stolen 20 bases this season to break the all-time school record)

HOBBIES & INTERESTS: Music and sports

CAPSULE: A shoulder injury curtailed his senior season, as he missed six games, but he still managed to catch 17 passes for 260 yards and one touchdown, rush for 77 yards and return 10 kickoffs for 385 yards and one TD. On defense, he made 20 tackles, broke up two passes and caused one fumble. Blomeier is an active member of the school's DARE program.

HIGH SCHOOL COACH MITCH LUNAK:

"I will tell you how important Rob was to our football team and how good he is. There is no question in my mind that if Rob played the entire season for us, we could have won or at least been a contender for a championship. He is a super talent, with tons of guts, and he will be a great player at Nebraska."

FRANK SOLICH:

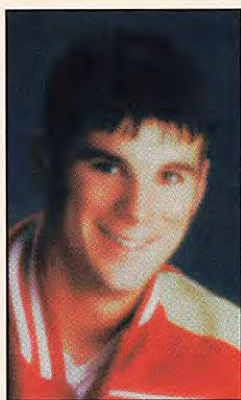
"Rob could actually play any number of positions for us on both sides of the ball. We plan to play him on defense at either cornerback or free safety. He could also be a strong safety, too. We realize that he was not a highly touted player, but we had him in our camp, and seeing his quickness and movement and athletic ability, that was enough for us."

WHY ROB CHOSE NEBRASKA:

"I knew that I wanted to go to Nebraska after I went to their football camp. I liked how hard the coaches worked with us and how they went about their business in a professional manner. Lincoln is a great atmosphere for football because it seems all the fans are so into their football team. Nebraska has such a winning tradition that the opportunity to go there was just too good to pass up."

SELECTED NEBRASKA OVER: Only visited Nebraska, but considered Maryland, Penn State and Pittsburgh

Son of Audrey and Bob Blomeier



Shaun Coleman

Linebacker
Littleton, Colo.
(Regis Jesuit)
Height: 6-4
Weight: 210
Speed: 4.4
DOB: July 26,
1980

OFFENSE/DEFENSE RUN: Nebraska style/ 4-3

HONORS: All-American SuperPrep; Honorable Mention All-American (USA Today); No. 5 athlete Big 12 Region (Prep Star); All-State

OTHER SPORTS: Baseball (All-State outfielder, hitting .460 and leading Colorado in home runs with 11 and RBI with 41); track (sprints)

CAPSULE: Rated as a top five option quarterback before season, Coleman will move to outside linebacker at Nebraska and will play baseball. He is rated by Baseball America as one of the top 100 high school players in the country. Shaun's father, Robert, played for legendary coach Rod Dedeaux at USC in the late 60s. Coleman has a hand injury this spring and will run with the track team instead of playing baseball. He rushed for 1,145 yards and 16 touchdowns and passed for more than 600 and two touchdowns. He averaged 41 yards per punt. Playing in just four games on defense, he made 44 tackles and had six sacks.

HIGH SCHOOL COACH BILL MARA:

"Shaun had not played football until his freshman year, so I put him defense. As a sophomore, I brought him up and gave him some reps as an offensive lineman. His junior year, I decided to go ahead and put him at quarterback, and on the first play as a quarterback, he runs an option for a 60-yard touchdown. I can't really sum up his abilities any better than that. He's a natural athlete."

FRANK SOLICH:

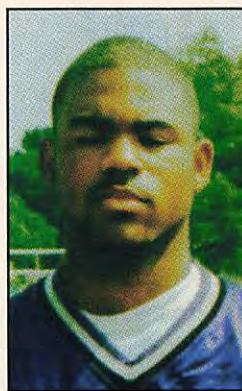
"We always try to sign great athletes, and Shaun is one of the best in the country. He played option quarterback in high school and is good enough there that we wouldn't feel bad about playing him on offense. However, we recruited him to play on defense, and he might grow into a middle linebacker, but he runs well enough to play the WILL or the SAM."

WHY SHAUN CHOSE NEBRASKA:

"I just wanted to go to the best football program in the country, and Nebraska is that school. They told me right away they wanted me to play outside linebacker, and that is fine with me. In fact, I am looking forward to it."

SELECTED NEBRASKA OVER: Notre Dame, USC, Northwestern and Arizona

Son of Rennei and Robert Coleman



Carl Crawford

Quarterback
Houston
(Jefferson Davis)
Height: 6-2
Weight: 205
Speed: 4.4
DOB: Aug. 5,
1981

TEAM'S 1998 RECORD: 5-5

OFFENSE/DEFENSE RUN: Option-I/50 front

HONORS: All-American (SuperPrep); All-District; No. 12 quarterback Big 12 region (Prep Star); Texas Top-100 (Dallas Morning News)

OTHER SPORTS: Baseball (centerfield, hit .583 with 8 home runs)

HOBBIES & INTERESTS: Hanging out with friends and having fun

CAPSULE: As a senior, Crawford ran for 1,213 yards and 14 touchdowns, while completing 27 of 66 passes for 509 yards and eight touchdowns. Crawford is a first-team All-Academic selection. He was listed as the 24th best prep baseball player in the country by Baseball America Magazine.

HIGH SCHOOL COACH CHUCK ARNOLD:

"Carl is one of the best pure athletes that I have had the pleasure to coach. I am not really sure which sports he is best at, football or baseball. I know he wants to play both sports. He's a raw quarterback but has all the potential in the world in an option offense and has a strong arm and can learn to throw it. He would make an excellent defensive back at Nebraska if they wanted to play him on that side of the ball."

FRANK SOLICH:

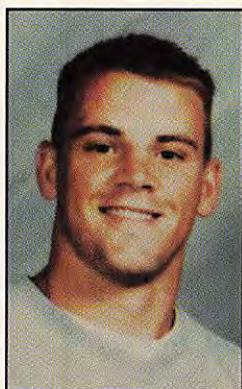
"Carl has said some nice things about us, and we are real pleased with his feelings toward our program. He wants to be here and has let everybody know that. When an athlete shows such positive emotions toward us as coaches, it always makes us feel good about ourselves. He's an outstanding athlete that could play several positions. He's also an outstanding baseball talent and could go high in the draft, however, he has expressed that he wants to play both football and baseball here at Nebraska."

WHY CARL CHOSE NEBRASKA:

"I just decided on Nebraska because I wanted to continue to run the option as a quarterback, and what better program is there running option football than Nebraska. At Nebraska, they play on national TV and play for national championships. The coaches also seemed real nice, and I got along with their current players very well."

SELECTED NEBRASKA OVER: Texas A&M, Oklahoma, Kansas and TCU

Son of Leisha Crawford and Steve Burns



Judd Davies

Fullback
Omaha
(Millard North)
Height: 6-1
Weight: 235
Speed: 4.7
DOB: Feb. 9, 1981

TEAM'S 1998 RECORD: 11-2, state semifinals

OFFENSE/DEFENSE RUN: Option/ 4-3

HONORS: All-American (SuperPrep); Super-State (Lincoln Journal Star); All-Nebraska (Omaha World-Herald)

OTHER SPORTS: Baseball (first base and outfield, hit .380)

HOBBIES & INTERESTS: Hanging out with friends and having fun

CAPSULE: A torn ACL cost him his junior year, but he bounced back with a vengeance, rushing for more than 1,500 yards and 23 touchdowns as a senior. He doubled up as a linebacker his senior season and had 90 tackles. Judd is incredibly strong with a 365-pound bench and 545 squat. Davies was nominated by his teachers and voted upon by his fellow students as the Millard North Man of the Year. He carries a 3.96 GPA and hopes to study medicine.

HIGH SCHOOL COACH FRED PETITO:

"Judd is the best fullback I have ever coached period. He's a prototype fullback,, yet has the running skills of a tailback. He could easily play tailback. I think. No, he wouldn't have that elusiveness, but his strength and power is so awesome that he makes up for that lack of ability to make people miss. Judd will wear down a defense and did that for us in each and every game. By the fourth quarter, they do not want to tackle him anymore."

FRANK SOLICH:

"Every game, he produced at a very high level at Millard North. Knee injury cost him his junior year, and it limited him coming off surgery, but once he began to really trust the knee, he played outstanding football. He is an outstanding young man who has a great career in front of him at the fullback spot."

WHY JUDD CHOSE NEBRASKA:

"I chose Nebraska because I felt spiritually I could worship my Lord the right away and appreciate how the Nebraska coaches approached their faith. Nebraska is a strong academic program with a great athletic tradition, and those were also deciding factors in my decision. I know at Nebraska I will be able to succeed athletically, academically and spiritually."

SELECTED NEBRASKA OVER: Only visited Nebraska but had offers from Ohio State, Notre Dame, Michigan, Kansas State and Stanford

Son of Nancy and Dale Davies

Josh Davis

I-back
Loveland, Colo.

Height: 5-11

Weight: 190

Speed: 4.38

DOB: Oct. 11, 1980

TEAM'S 1998 RECORD: 8-3, first round of playoffs

OFFENSE RUN: Wishbone, I-formation

HONORS: All-Class All-State for the (Denver Post); All-American (SuperPrep); No. 6 running back Big 12 Region (Prep Star)

CAPSULE: Nebraska's first oral commitment back in June. The son of former Nebraska I-back Tony Davis, Josh is a speed back with power and the ability to make people miss in the open field. Last season, Davis rushed for 1,422 yards and 21 touchdowns and averaged 9.7 yards per carry. Davis finished the season the sixth leading rusher in Colorado. He also caught 25 passes for 595 yards and two touchdowns and finished with 31 all-purpose touchdowns. Also a threat as a kick returner, Davis returned four kickoffs for touchdowns, with the longest covering 89 yards, and scored on four punt returns, the longest covering 93 yards. On 12 punt returns, Davis averaged 45 yards. Davis placed sixth in the state meet in the 100 meters with a time of 10.71. His best 200-meter time is 21.6. His father, Tony, played for the Cornhuskers from 1973-75 and rushed for 2,153 yards to rank 15th all-time on the Nebraska rushing charts. Josh has a twin sister, Dara, and two brothers, Tony and Brandon. Josh lived in Nebraska for six years, before moving to Colorado when he was in the sixth grade. He still has uncles that live in Lincoln and Omaha.

HIGH SCHOOL COACH JOHN POOVEY:

"I would take a ton of players like Josh and be very happy about it. As a junior, he took control of a game against Rocky Mountain that was scoreless with two minutes to go. We just kept giving him the ball, and he picked up a couple of first downs. Then, on third-and-9, he was hit in the backfield but ran over that guy, then made another guy miss, then stiff-armed a cornerback to the ground, before diving for the first down. That kept the drive alive, and he eventually scored the winning touchdown for us."

FRANK SOLICH:

"We know that he has great bloodlines, as his dad, Tony, was a great football player for us at the University of Nebraska. Josh is not as big as Tony, but he has a lot more speed. He is the type of running back that we have recruited in the past and had great success with. We believe that he is going to be a great I-back for us."

SELECTED NEBRASKA OVER: Only visited Nebraska, but was also offered by Washington, Iowa, Colorado State, Oregon

Son of Lori and Tony Davis



Jon Dawson

Offensive Line
Cheyenne, Wyo.
(Central)

Height: 6-3
Weight: 285
Speed: 5.1
DOB: Oct. 29,
1980

TEAM'S 1998 RECORD: 5-3, state playoffs

OFFENSE/DEFENSE RUN: Multiple/ 5-2

HONORS: All-State; selection for the second straight year in offensive line; Class 4A Lineman of the Year (Casper Tribune, Wyoming Tribune); Regional Elite Team (Rocky Mountain News)

OTHER SPORTS: Track (shot put best of 55-0 and discus best of 182-3)

HOBBIES & INTERESTS: Physical fitness, drawing

CAPSULE: A two-way performer on the offensive and defensive line, Dawson also lined up at fullback at times. Dawson graded out at 90 percent in every game on offense and averaged five knockdowns per game and had more than 50 last season. On defense, he led his team with 100 points, including 50 assisted tackles, 20 solo stops, five tackles for losses and one fumble recovery.

HIGH SCHOOL COACH BRICK CEGELSKI:

"Jon did everything for us. We even played him at center a few times. In a conference game against Natrona, Jon pulled to the right side to take out the defensive end. He hit the guy so hard that he lifted him off the ground and planted him, and that is from a dead run from a pulling situation. Jon is a dominant offensive lineman, and he's good on defense as well. Once he gets into that Nebraska weight room and matures a little bit more, he is going to be a great player in college."

COACH FRANK SOLICH:

"We had a chance to watch Jon at our football camp this summer and saw that he was a very explosive lineman and finished well once he made contact. He is quick coming off the ball and knocks people around. His style of play in high school is perfectly suited for how we play at Nebraska. We have had great success with offensive lineman his size."

WHY JON CHOSE NEBRASKA:

"My decision came down to Nebraska and Wyoming, and I just felt that the education that I could get and the athletic facilities were better at Nebraska. I want to thank my high school coaches Brick Cegelski, Brad Pickett, Terry Martin, Dan Kudworth and Bill Godina, for helping me so much during my high school career. Without them, I wouldn't have my priorities in order and wouldn't be going to Nebraska."

SELECTED NEBRASKA OVER: Wyoming

Son of Barbara and Herb Dawson



Toniu Fonoti

Offensive Line
Hauula, Hawaii
(Kahuku)

Height: 6-4
Weight: 300
Speed: 5.0
DOB: July 26,
1981

TEAM'S 1999 RECORD: 12-1 (state runner-up largest class)

OFFENSE/DEFENSE RUN: I-formation/ 4-3

HONORS: All-State (Honolulu Star-Bulletin); All-West Region (Prep Star)

OTHER SPORTS: Basketball (starter, 5 points per game); track (discus 152 feet, shot put 50 feet)

HOBBIES & INTERESTS: All sports, drawing, playing guitar

CAPSULE: Pronounced Toe-NEE-you Foe-no-TEE. A huge, physical player who can bench press 340 pounds and squat 500 pounds. He started and went both ways at El Camino High School in Oceanside, Calif., one of the top prep programs in the country, his junior season. Moved to Kahuku, where he averaged three pancake blocks a game, just playing on offense. Toniu was the key reason Kahuku went to the state finals, before losing to nationally ranked St. Louis Prep. He is considered a better run blocker but was much improved protecting the passer.

HIGH SCHOOL COACH SIWAKI LAVAI:

"Toniu is big, strong and physical and brings a defensive personality to the offensive line. He could play guard or tackle, and right now, he is a dominating run blocker. He's improved as a pass blocker, and we run a great deal of our offense behind him."

FRANK SOLICH:

"I think Toniu is typical of what we look for in an offensive lineman. He has great strength and is a physical offensive lineman that does well with his leverage underneath his opponent. Toniu has good movement for a big man and really fits in nicely with the type of lineman that we have always had success with here, with his mobility and strength at the point of attack."

WHY TONIU CHOSE NEBRASKA:

"I really like the academics a great deal. Nebraska had a great support system, and they have updated a lot of their computers and equipment and have made an effort to really help the athletes. The coaching staff is very solid and has been at Nebraska for some time. The program and its qualifications speaks for itself."

SELECTED NEBRASKA OVER: Arizona, Kentucky, BYU and Colorado

Son of Emaline and Fonoti Satele Fonoti

Class of '99



John Garrison

**Rush End/
Defensive Line
Blue Springs, Mo.
Height: 6-5
Weight: 265
Speed: 4.9
DOB: July 7,
1980**

TEAM'S 1998 RECORD: 7-3

OFFENSE/DEFENSE RUN: Run-n-shoot/4-3

HONORS: All-State; All-Area; All-Conference; Buck Buchanan Award as top defensive lineman Kansas City Metro Area; All-Region (SuperPrep); No. 4 defensive tackle prospect Big 12 region (Prep Star)

OTHER SPORTS: Track (shot put 50 feet)

HOBBIES & INTEREST: Hunting and fishing.

CAPSULE: For his career, Garrison had 248 tackles, 56 tackles for losses, 25 sacks and one interception. This past season, Garrison came up with 99 tackles, 65 unassisted, 27 for losses and seven sacks. Last season against arch-rival Blue Springs South, Garrison had 20 tackles, 15 unassisted.

HIGH SCHOOL COACH BOB BEATTY:

"John is the type of defensive tackle today that is having so much success on the professional level. He's big, but fast, can blow off the ball and plays with his motor running 100 miles an hour. There honestly wasn't a game that John played in that I can say I was disappointed in his play. He destroys single blocks and blows through double teams. Nebraska has signed a player that I feel is going to be an All-American before his playing days are over."

FRANK SOLICH:

"John already weighs 265 pounds, at 6-5, so he has the size we are looking for in our rush ends. He has a great frame, so depending on how big he really gets, we could move him inside or not. We were impressed with his mobility. He moves very well for a guy his size, has quick feet and usually manages to stay on his feet. We believe that he will have a great career for us here at Nebraska."

WHY JOHN CHOSE NEBRASKA:

"The name speaks for himself. I really enjoyed the environment when I visited. Not just the football environment either. The town and the people in the town were friendly and nice. Everything is done in a classy manner and first class within the football program. I also developed a great relationship with Coach McBride over the year, and I like how the Cornhuskers play their defensive ends. They really turn them loose."

SELECTED NEBRASKA OVER: Kansas State and Notre Dame

Son of Jill and John Garrison



Taylor Gehman

**Defensive Back
Omaha
(Northwest)
Height: 5-11
Weight: 190
Speed: 4.55
DOB: Oct. 15,
1980**

TEAM'S 1998 RECORD: 1-8

DEFENSE RUN: 4-3 front

HONORS: Super-State (Lincoln Journal Star); All-Nebraska (Omaha World Herald); No. 5 prospect in Big 12 (First Down Recruiting)

OTHER SPORTS: Track (4x100 relay, fourth in the state meet); Basketball (starting point guard and four-year letterman, averaging 10 points)

HOBBIES & INTERESTS: Helping others, recreational sports

CAPSULE: Taylor is a three-year starter, who also excels in basketball and track. He's run a 10.7 100 meters, 22.0 200 and a 50.0 400. For the past two years, Gehman has led the state in tackles with 137 in nine games last year and 133 this past season. Gehman earned Academic All-State honors, carries a 4.3 GPA and ranks 20th in a class of 350.

HIGH SCHOOL COACH GEORGE DRINNIN:

"I can't believe that there was a more productive player than Taylor was for us. He led the state in tackles for two straight years, played free safety for us like he reinvented the position and is one of the best all-around students that we have at Northwest. A sure tackler, Gehman has a knack for being around the ball and is an outstanding cover guy as well."

FRANK SOLICH:

"We identified him in our camp as a player to watch, and after two great years at Omaha Northwest, we thought he was the type of player that could be great in our system. He just shows up around the ball all the time, which is a great quality in a defensive back."

WHY TAYLOR CHOSE NEBRASKA:

"The Nebraska program is so close to home and is considered one of the top programs in the country. My family can watch me play, and I have a chance to win the national championship every year. Nebraska has a great tradition, and I have always wanted to be a Nebraska Blackshirt."

SELECTED NEBRASKA OVER: Only visited Nebraska but was offered by Stanford, Notre Dame and all Ivy League schools

Son of Sherri Reinert-Gehman and Jim Gehman



Tim Green

Offensive Line
Omaha
(Westside)
Height: 6-5
Weight: 305
Speed: 5.25
DOB: Jan. 27,
1981

TEAM'S 1998 RECORD: 8-3 (Class A semifinals)

OFFENSE/DEFENSE RUN: I-formation/ 4-4

HONORS: Super State (Lincoln Journal Star); All-Nebraska (Omaha World-Herald); No. 12 offensive line prospect (Prep Star)

OTHER SPORTS: Track (four years varsity, shot and discus; second in state as sophomore, 57-11)

HOBBIES & INTEREST: Recreational basketball and WWF wrestling

CAPSULE: Green was a three-year starter on both sides of the ball at Westside. He can bench press 335 pounds. In 1998, Green had 25 solo tackles, 55 assists and eight sacks. On offense, Green registered 70 pancake blocks. Tim has two older brothers and two older sisters attending NU. Brother Mike is a walkon redshirt freshman offensive tackle.

HIGH SCHOOL COACH LARRY MORRISSEY:

"Tim is a great physical talent and has been a dominant performer for us since his sophomore year. He has great size, quickness and knows how to use his abilities to his advantage. Usually Tim just destroys the man across from him to the point the defense has to compensate for it and breaks down the defensive concept. His brother, Mike, was a great player for us, and Tim is that same caliber of player."

FRANK SOLICH:

"We have been aware of Tim for a long time and were very impressed with how he progressed throughout the season. He seemed to get better every game. We had him marked as a possible scholarship player early in the summer, and by the way he finished out the season, we knew that he was that kind of talent. I really like how he approaches the line of scrimmage. You can tell he wants to succeed."

WHY TIM CHOSE NEBRASKA:

"My parents really had a big impact on my decision. They wanted me to stay close to home, and I wanted to play with my brother, Mike. I have been around the program it seems for ever and know everything about it. I even know a lot of the players already. Nebraska has been my favorite team since I was little, and I knew if I was given the chance that I would be playing at Nebraska."

SELECTED NEBRASKA OVER: Tennessee, Notre Dame, Florida State and Michigan

Son of Linda and Steve Green



Larry Henderson

Wide Receiver
Los Angeles
(Palisades/W.
Los Angeles CC)
Height: 6-1
Weight: 190
Speed: 4.4
DOB: Nov. 30,
1974

OFFENSE RUN: One-back spread

HONORS: No. 30th junior college prospect (SuperPrep); second team All-Conference

OTHER SPORTS: Track (sprints)

HOBBIES & INTERESTS: Sports and physical fitness

CAPSULE: Henderson has already enrolled at Nebraska and is running with the Husker track program. He has times of 10.4 in the 100 meters and 21.3 in the 200. A graduate of Palisades High School in Los Angeles in 1992, Henderson worked in the private sector before enlisting in the Navy for three years from 1993-1995. He was back in the work force for two years, before enrolling at West Los Angeles Community College in Culver City, Calif. Henderson caught 30 passes last season averaging 18 yards per catch and returned kickoffs and punts.

JUNIOR COLLEGE COACH ROB HAGAR:

"Larry is loaded with pure speed. There are very few defensive backs that can run with Larry. He can improve on his routes and getting off the line of scrimmage, but he was just getting back into the swing of things with us after a couple of years off, when he graduated and went off to Nebraska. Nebraska has always found a way to use great speed guys like Larry, and he should experience great success there."

FRANK SOLICH:

"Larry is an excellent football player and a great track man. He will give us a deep threat and the kind of speed on reverses that can make big plays. He might be a punt returner for us or a kick returner, the kind of guy that really stretches our opponents' special teams. Larry is someone we'd like to get the ball to when possible, with that kind of speed."

WHY LARRY CHOSE NEBRASKA:

"I really like the coaches and the big time college football atmosphere at Nebraska. I also like the fact that Nebraska's running game is so good that we always draw one-on-one coverage at wide receiver. I also like the Nebraska track program. Nebraska is just a good opportunity for me at this time."

SELECTED NEBRASKA OVER: Tennessee, Washington, USC, UCLA and Michigan State

Son of the late LeMeach Jackson and Patsy Jackson



Blanchard Johnson III

Linebacker
Omaha
(Council Bluffs St. Albert)

Height: 6-0
Weight: 200
Speed: 4.6
DOB: May 30, 1981

TEAM'S 1998 RECORD: 10-1, state quarterfinals

DEFENSE RUN: 4-3

HONORS: All-State; City Player of the Year; Iowa Class 2A Co-Player of the Year

OTHER SPORTS: Wrestling (30-0 at 189 pounds this year); baseball (catcher); Track (3 letters, fifth place in state meet in the 100 meters: 10.8)

HOBBIES & INTERESTS: Sports and hanging out with friends

CAPSULE: Blanchard actually lives and was born in Omaha but attends St. Albert High School in Council Bluffs, Iowa. Johnson rushed for 1,929 yards and 35 career touchdowns as a running back, all in his senior season. On defense, he had 450 career tackles, 151 this past season with nine sacks. Johnson qualified for the state wrestling meet as a freshman and sophomore, is the starting catcher in baseball and participates in four events in track. He is the first St. Albert athlete to earn a scholarship at Nebraska.

HIGH SCHOOL COACH KEN SCHRIEBER:

"Blanchard looks undersized to most, but he is so tough and so quick that he more than makes up for his lack of height. He was a great linebacker for us, but we could have played him at safety, too. He is so physical that I put him at linebacker, and he dominated for us. He does so many things for us at St. Albert, but when he gets to Nebraska, he will concentrate only on football athletically, and you will see his skills accelerate tremendously."

FRANK SOLICH:

"Blanchard will play the strong or WILL linebacker for us. He is a tremendous athlete and could also play strong safety or even on the offensive side of the ball. However, as you know we graduate approximately three deep at the WILL and SAM positions. We need to have some young players ready to step up in about a year."

WHY BLANCHARD CHOSE NEBRASKA:

"When I took my visit to Nebraska, I felt very comfortable. They had everything that I was looking for in a football program. I was looking for a school where I could reach my full potential, and at Nebraska I know that I can do that."

SELECTED NEBRASKA OVER: Iowa, Iowa State, Michigan and Wyoming

Son of Liz and Blanchard Johnson Jr.



Trevor Johnson

Tight End
Lincoln
(Northeast)
Height: 6-5
Weight: 225
Speed: 4.7
DOB: Feb. 26, 1981

TEAM'S 1998 RECORD: 10-2, state semifinals

OFFENSE/DEFENSE USED: Multiple/50 front

HONORS: Super State (Lincoln Journal Star); All-Nebraska (Omaha World Herald); No. 7 tight end Big 12 Region (Prep Star)

OTHER SPORTS: Basketball (2-year letterman, averaging 14 points); track (shot and discus).

HOBBIES & INTERESTS: Outdoor life, hunting and fishing

CAPSULE: A broken fibula and tibia during Johnson's junior season made him one of the best kept secrets in Nebraska. His senior season, he caught 42 passes for 736 yards and 10 touchdowns and scored twice on defense, on an interception and a fumble return of 64 yards against Southeast. He had 54 tackles and 13 tackles for 130 yards in losses. He's thrown the discus 165-8 and has earned Academic All-State honors. Trevor's father, Bob, was a three-time captain for the Nebraska wrestling team and earned four letters from 1973-1976.

HIGH SCHOOL COACH MARK KING:

"Trevor missed his junior season because of a broken leg, and that cost him a lot of preseason publicity. Also, it put doubt in some college coaches' minds. However, he showed them this past year that he is a great athlete and that he was fully recovered. Trevor did so many things for us and is such a great all-around player. He has good hands and is a good blocker at the point of attack."

FRANK SOLICH:

"Trevor was a great two-way player at Lincoln Northeast. I really think he could play either tight end or rush end for us and get it done for us on either side of the ball. He's a great person and a great athlete."

WHY TREVOR CHOSE NEBRASKA:

"I have lived in Nebraska all my life and have always wanted to play for the Cornhuskers. It's truly an honor that they want to give me a scholarship. Nebraska has the best facilities in the country and a great group of coaches. I know they will help me become the best player I can be."

SELECTED NEBRASKA OVER: Only visited Nebraska but was offered by New Mexico State, Iowa State, Missouri, Wyoming, Colorado and Colorado State

Son of Cheryl and Robert Johnson

Washidimba (Patrick) Kabongo

Rush End
Montreal, Quebec
(Vanier College Prep)
Height: 6-6
Weight: 315
Speed: 5.0

TEAM'S 1998 RECORD: 8-2, state runner-up.
OFFENSE/DEFENSE RUN: I-formation/50 front
HONORS: All-American (SuperPrep); League Defensive Players of Year; No. 2 prep player in Canada
OTHER SPORTS: Basketball
HOBBIES & INTERESTS: Physical fitness (weightlifting), movies and recreational basketball
CAPSULE: Goes by Patrick. A native of Zaire, Kabongo has played just three years of organized football, two at Vanier College, a prep school in Montreal, Quebec, Canada and one in a youth organization the year before he started at Vanier. Kabongo speaks French as his first language and English as his second. He bench presses 330 pounds and squats 510. Kabongo made 60 solo stops a year ago, despite being double- and triple-teamed. Kabongo moved to Canada when he was four but has toured the U.S. with a youth basketball team.

HIGH SCHOOL COACH RAYMOND GAGNON:

"Patrick is just scratching the surface of his football ability. He has so many big games for us. I was surprised that so many teams tried to run at him. It got to the point they couldn't move him, yet they seemed to try anyway. Many times, you will see the running back on the ground in the backfield and wonder how he got there and then look up and Patrick is getting up off that player."

FRANK SOLICH:

"Patrick is a great athlete who could actually play rush end for us, despite his size. His feet are that good. He would like to play rush end. Of course when you are 6-6 and 315, you can play wherever you want. He could wind up inside, but we are going to start him off outside and see how it goes."

WHY PATRICK CHOOSE NEBRASKA:

"I liked the people and the players on the team. The team made me feel a part of it on my visit. I was shown around by Dahrran Diedrick, and the players really seems to feel that football was important to them. In fact, the people in the state that I ran into really seemed to like their football and what the University meant to them. Playing in Canada, I wanted to make sure that I went to a school that football was important to it."

SELECTED NEBRASKA OVER: Boston College, Kentucky and Central Florida, who he visited. Turned down visits to Michigan and Northwestern

Son of Angele Kaijingis Kabongo



Chris Loos

Offensive Line
Lincoln
(Southeast)
Height: 6-3
Weight: 300
Speed: 5.4
DOB: May 19,
1981

TEAM'S 1998 RECORD: 12-1, second straight state championship
OFFENSE/DEFENSE RUN: Multiple/4-3
HONORS: Super-State (Lincoln Journal Star); All-Nebraska (Omaha World Herald) No. 3 offensive lineman Big 12 Region (Prep Star)
OTHER SPORTS: Wrestling (4-year letterman), track (shot and discus state qualifier)
HOBBIES & INTERESTS: Fishing and hunting
CAPSULE: Chris was a solid two-way performer for the past two seasons as an offensive and defensive tackle. Loos was the second athlete to commit to the Cornhuskers back in the summer. Loos had 67 tackles (21 solo) and 13 tackles for losses. He has a 325 bench and a 510 squat.

HIGH SCHOOL COACH CHUCK MIZERSKI:

"Chris is such a balanced offensive lineman, meaning that he dominates as both a run and pass blocker. He is blessed with great strength, has good feet and balance at the line of scrimmage and plays with a defensive attitude on the offensive line. Chris is the type of talent that Nebraska always turns into an All-American offensive lineman."

FRANK SOLICH:

"Chris plays with the same kind of tenacity that others that have played before have shown. We have known about him for some time and feel he will fit in well with us in our program."

WHY CHRIS CHOSE NEBRASKA:

"Ever since I first attended a Nebraska game, I have wanted to play for the Nebraska Cornhuskers. I have never hid the fact that Nebraska was my football team and that I have always wanted to play for them."

SELECTED NEBRASKA OVER: Only visited Nebraska, but was offered by Michigan, Kentucky and Tennessee

Son of Jodi and Wes Loos

Jammal Lord

Quarterback
Bayonne, N.J.

Height: 6-3

Weight: 195

Speed: 4.6

DOB: May 16, 1980

TEAM'S 1998 RECORD: 7-3-1, first round of playoffs

HONORS: All-State; No. 4 athlete Eastern Region (Prep Star)

OTHER SPORTS: Basketball (18 points and 7 assists per game as point guard)

HOBBIES & INTERESTS: PlayStation basketball and baseball, painting

CAPSULE: Lord is another great athlete that Nebraska has signed from New Jersey. He will be the first signee from Bayonne since Ernie Beler signed as a junior college transfer in 1991. Lord has improved his passing ability, but he didn't have much of an opportunity to show it as he hit on 22 of 41 passes for 360 yards and four touchdowns. He rushed for 1,306 yards and 21 TDs.

HIGH SCHOOL COACH JOHN RICKARD:

"Jammal is a super player that we could count on in each and every game. He is poised under pressure, runs the option well and throws a nice ball. Jammal throws the ball well on the run and has worked on his throwing to the point that it has gone from a question mark for him to a strength. He has excellent size and speed and will be a good one at Nebraska."

FRANK SOLICH:

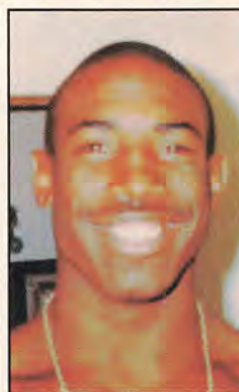
"We are looking forward to coaching Jammal and for him to have success here. He's a very talented guy and could wind up at several positions for us, but we have recruited him as a quarterback, and that is what he is working toward."

WHY JAMMAL CHOSE NEBRASKA:

"Nebraska indicated a need for a quarterback, and they have a great tradition at the position and with their program. I wanted a chance to play quarterback for a great program and a great team, and Nebraska is one of the very best in the country. At Nebraska, you have a chance to win a national championship every year, and that is what I am looking for."

SELECTED NEBRASKA OVER: Syracuse and Temple

Son of Jacqueline Roberson and Arthur Branch



Robin Miller

I-Back
Kent, Wash.
(Kent-Meridian)

Height: 5-11

Weight: 220

Speed: 4.5

DOB:

TEAM'S 1998 RECORD: 3-6

HONORS: All-American (SuperPrep); Player of the Year for Washington (Gatorade); Player of the Year (Washington Athletic Association); All-State; Northwest Nugget team (Tacoma News-Tribune)

OTHER SPORTS: Track (100 meters: 10.7, 4X100 relay)

HOBBIES & INTERESTS: Physical fitness, lifting weights and hanging out with friends

CAPSULE: Miller set eight school records and two South Puget Sound League records by rushing for 1,726 yards and gaining 2,072 all-purpose yards. In nine games, he rushed for more than 100 yards, with his lowest total 138 yards. Miller had four 200-yard games, including a school record 264 and three touchdowns against Enumclaw. He scored on a 90-yard run the first time he touched the ball as a sophomore.

HIGH SCHOOL COACH BRUCE RICK:

"Robin is one of the most gifted athletes that I have ever been around. He may wind up on defense at Nebraska, but don't rule out his running abilities. He is a great running back and really made things happen for us."

FRANK SOLICH:

"Some people may not realize it, but we got a great running back prospect in Robin Miller. There is no question that Miller is a great athlete and could wind up at a number of positions for us, but we feel he can be a super tailback. He's a big, tough, aggressive football player. When you watch his running style, he reminds me of Mike Rozier. He runs through tackles, is quick and makes strong cuts. Miller has tremendous quickness and instincts that not many athletes have."

WHY ROBIN CHOSE NEBRASKA:

"I really liked the fact that the entire coaching staff was involved with my recruiting, not just one person. I had three different coaches come to see my games, and that impressed me. When I went to their camp, I saw first-hand why their program is so good. They have things that they do down pat and do them over and over again."

SELECTED NEBRASKA OVER: Arizona, Northwestern, Colorado, Oregon, Washington and Michigan

Son of Timorye Murray and Shane Miller



Spencer Owen

Rush End
Carrollton, Mo.

Height: 6-5
Weight: 235
Speed: 4.8
DOB: Aug. 2,
1980

TEAM'S 1998 RECORD: 7-3, second round of play-offs

HONORS: All-State; All-Conference; All-District

OTHER SPORTS: Track (defending 2A state champion shot put)

HOBBIES & INTERESTS: Weight lifting, farming and hunting

CAPSULE: Owen has been a starter since mid-way through his freshman year on defense and three years on offense. The rush end prospect had 36 sacks. This past season, Owen had 113 tackles (73 solos), six fumble recoveries, two passes broken up, five blocked kicks, 16 sacks and one forced fumble.

HIGH SCHOOL COACH STAN KEE:

"I really think that Spencer is the best kept secret in America. He's been a great player for us for three years, but at the beginning of the summer, it seemed nobody knew about him. He is the best pass rusher I have ever coached. He wants to sack the quarterback, has that attitude that he is going to sack the quarterback and has the physical tools to get there. He set a career sack record at our school. Spencer is a great kid, with a great work ethic and comes from good parents. Nebraska got themselves the total package when they signed Spencer."

FRANK SOLICH:

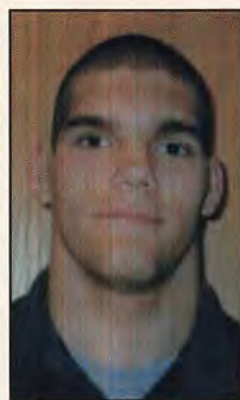
"Spencer has a tremendous work ethic, and from what we have watched on film, he's the type of player that we have had at the position in the past. He is a fantastic pass rusher and has long arms to block passes at the line of scrimmage. Spencer has a relentless style of play that is very physical, and he makes a great number of plays."

WHY SPENCER CHOSE NEBRASKA:

"The coaching staff was the big reason why I went to Nebraska, particularly Coach McBride. Things don't change much at Nebraska, and when they do, you know they have been well thought out, and there is a good reason why they have changed something. Nebraska has a great tradition, and their fan support is second to none. I think they have the best football program in the country, and really there is no comparison."

SELECTED NEBRASKA OVER: Missouri and Kansas State

Son of Ruth and Weldon Owen



Phil Peetz

Defensive Line
Elkhorn, Neb.

Height: 6-2
Weight: 245
Speed: 4.9
DOB: Dec. 12,
1980

TEAM'S 1998 RECORD: 10-1, first round playoffs

DEFENSE RUN: Nebraska style

HONORS: Super-State (Lincoln Star Journal); All-Nebraska (Omaha World-Herald) as a defensive lineman in 1997 and 1998; All-Midland Region team (SuperPrep)

OTHER SPORTS: Wrestling (heavyweight)

HOBBIES & INTERESTS: Reading, physical fitness, music and hanging around with friends

CAPSULE: Peetz played on both sides of the ball and will start out on defense, where he recorded 35 tackles last season, despite being hampered by a shoulder injury that required surgery at the end of the season. The surgery kept Peetz out of wrestling, where he was a two-time medalist. Peetz is a 4.17 student and ranked first in his class.

HIGH SCHOOL COACH MARK WORKMAN:

"Phil has been a super player for us for three straight years, and we are sure going to miss him lining up for us next season. Shoulder surgery hurt his ability some this year, but he fought through it like a champion and has had it fixed, and he will be 100 percent again when he reports to Nebraska. Phil is a great all-around athlete for us."

FRANK SOLICH:

"He's an extremely strong player, intelligent, and we really think he can play several positions for us. Phil will get big enough to play on the interior line for us. His shoulder surgery will set back his weight training, but he's a hard worker and will catch up in a hurry. When you see his toughness and strength, you can see that he has the ability to play in the defensive line for us."

WHY PHIL CHOSE NEBRASKA:

"It's where I have wanted to go all my life. I have been a Nebraska football fan all my life, and when the opportunity came along for me to join their program, I couldn't miss out on that opportunity. I have worked with the Nebraska football coaches for the past four years at their summer camps and know them very well and their system. I love the Nebraska facilities and their academic program."

SELECTED NEBRASKA OVER: Only visited Nebraska, but was offered by Michigan, Notre Dame, Tennessee, Iowa, Kansas State and Kentucky

Son of Pat and Kenneth Peetz



Tamotu Tagoa'i

Defensive Line
Hauula, Hawaii
(St. Louis)
Height: 6-3
Weight: 290
Speed: 4.9
DOB: Nov. 19, 1979

TEAM'S 1998 RECORD: 13-1, state champions

DEFENSE RUN: 5-3

HONORS: All-State (Honolulu Star-Bulletin); No. 24 defensive lineman (Prep Star)

OTHER SPORTS: Track (shot put and discus)

HOBBIES & INTERESTS: Lifting weights and singing

CAPSULE: Tagoa'i joins former St. Louis teammates Dominic Raiola and Tony Tata on the Husker squad, continuing the three-year Husker/Hawaii St. Louis tradition. As a junior Tagoa'i was a backup to Tata, but moved into the starting lineup this past season and recorded 39 tackles, nine tackles for losses, four sacks, 17 quarterback hurries and four forced fumbles. His St. Louis team has won 13 championships and was ranked 23rd in the country by USA Today. Tagoa'i actually lives in Hauula, the same town of fellow Husker recruit Toniui Fonoti. Tagoa'i lived in Seattle, before moving to Hawaii to play at St. Louis in live with his uncle.

HIGH SCHOOL COACH CAL LEE:

"I just think that if Junior takes a great interest in what he's doing in football, then he is going to be outstanding. He has great size to go along with excellent speed and quickness. He will get into the Husker football program, work out in their weight room and I believe become an outstanding player for them. Good strength and quickness for a man his size. Coach Darlington at Nebraska said that Tamotu reminded him of Jason Peter, who was a great defensive tackle for them."

FRANK SOLICH:

"Tamotu has great size and strength, and we have been very lucky with those kinds of defensive lineman in the past. With his mobility and strength, we feel very good about him being an outstanding player for us."

WHY TAMOTU CHOSE NEBRASKA:

"The atmosphere in their football program was the best around. They have a real family atmosphere at Nebraska, and they run a similar defense to us here at St. Louis."

SELECTED NEBRASKA OVER: Washington State, Washington, California, Colorado, Oregon and Oregon State

Son of Adria and Tamotu Tagoa'i

Dan Waldrop

Offensive Line
Wilmington, Calif.
(Banning)

Height: 6-5

Weight: 320

Speed: 5.4

DOB: Nov. 15, 1980

OFFENSE RUN: Multiple

HONORS: All-District; All-Area; Honorable Mention Best of the West (Long Beach Press-Telegram)

CAPSULE: Nebraska never gave up on Waldrop, who had committed to Colorado before changing his mind. Dan has the kind of skill that the Cornhuskers are always looking for in their offensive line. He's incredibly strong with a 370-pound bench press and a 550 squat. Waldrop averaged three pancake blocks per game.

HOBBIES & INTERESTS: Physical fitness and hanging around with friends

HIGH SCHOOL COACH CHRIS GUTIERREZ:

"Dan is a great offensive line talent, the same kind that Nebraska has been churning out for year. He's big, powerful and plays with a tremendous amount of passion for what he wants to accomplish. There were many times this year that we just went out and put our offensive success on his shoulders. Against Crenshaw High in our conference opener, they play a physical brand of football, a true inner-city school. However, we had our halfback rush for 200 yards, and it was all behind Danny as he had some crushing blocks on the day."

FRANK SOLICH:

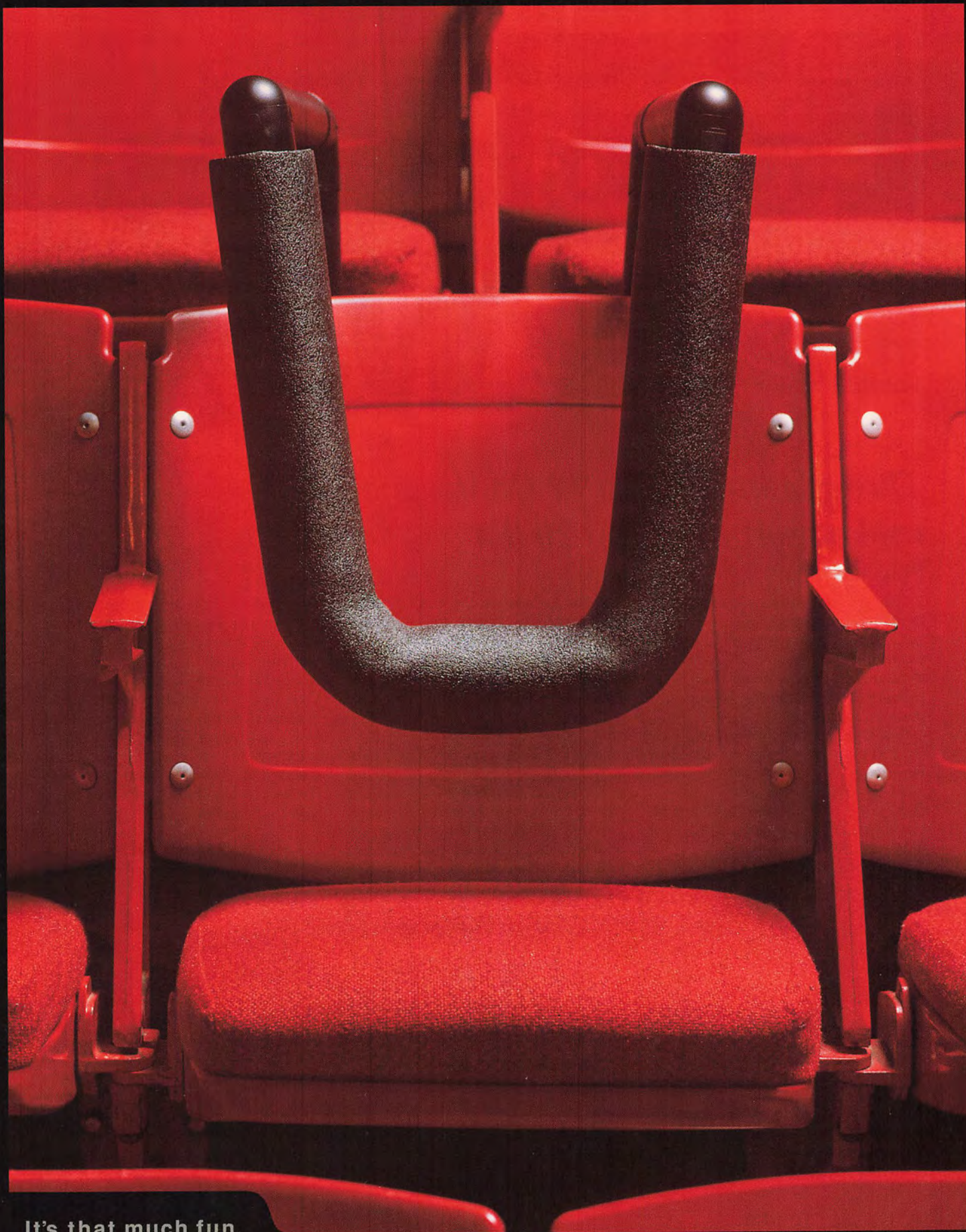
"We feel he is a great prospect and needs room to grow. Just how much he grows depends on how much he wants to put into it. He can still put size on his upper body, probably add another 30 pounds or so. Right now, he plays very well for his size. His best football certainly lies ahead of him."

WHY DAN CHOSE NEBRASKA:

"I switched from Colorado to Nebraska on signing day because after really looking things over, I learned that the Cornhuskers really have the best program, especially with the coaching change at Colorado. Nebraska never has any instability in their coaching situation, and that is a major plus for them. They have the best offensive line in the country, and their weight room is second to none."

SELECTED NEBRASKA OVER: Colorado, Arizona State, Washington, Washington State and Oregon

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Longhorns Lead Way

Three teams in Big 12 Conference make recruiting top 20 list

By James Hale

The general consensus in college football recruiting is:

Oklahoma salvaged a solid recruiting class against almost insurmountable odds, and big things are expected out of Bob Stoops and company in the future;

Oklahoma State put together its best recruiting class under Bob Simmons;

Mack Brown has everybody in college football running scared as he put together the top recruiting class in the country;

And the Big 12 is once again showing that it is one of the top foot-

ball conferences in the country with three teams ranked in the recruiting top 20 and seven in the top 50.

Here is a rundown of how the schools in the Big 12 Conference fared and where they stack up:

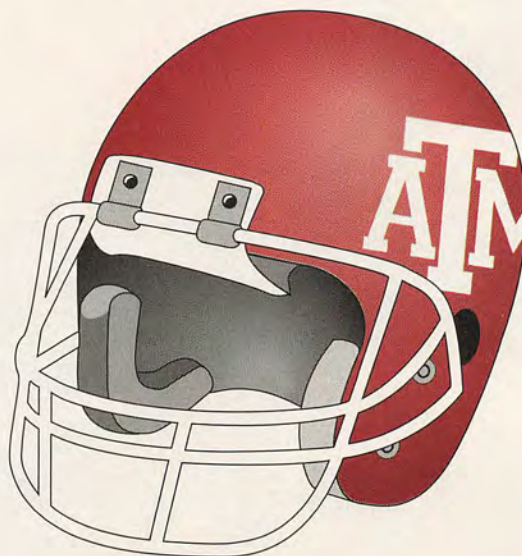
1. TEXAS

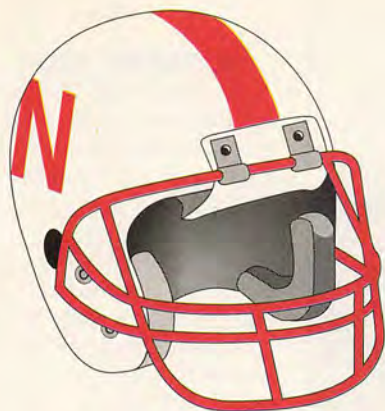
Mack Brown proved once again why he is considered one of the top recruiters in the country by signing the nation's top recruiting class. Leading the way is the nation's top quarterback prospect Chris Simms of Franklin Lakes, N.J., the son of former New York Giants quarterback

Phil Simms. The Longhorns also signed the nation's top defensive prospect, in linebacker Cory Redding of Houston North Shore, the nation's top defensive end prospect, Cole Pittman of Shreveport, La., and the top tight end in the country Bo Scaife of Denver (Mullen), Colo. Throw in the top-rated athletes in Texas in running back Kenny Hayter of Houston Cypress Falls, wide receiver Artie Ellis of Houston Westfield, tight end in Chad Stevens of Houston Cy Fair and athlete in Ivan Williams of Cleveland. That adds up to a class for which Longhorn fans will have great expectations.

2. TEXAS A&M

The Aggies put together a great class, yet still fall short of their arch-





rival. All-American quarterback Colby Freeman of Brownwood, Texas, fills a big need. Scoring All-American running back Joe Weber of San Bernardino, Calif., plus in-state stars Oschler Flemming of Denton Ryan and Maurice Harris of Aldine Nimitz reloads the Aggies in the backfield. All-American Jason Frederick of Houston Cy Falls is a super strong safety prospect, tight end Fred Spiller of Aldine Nimitz is all-world, and Jared Penright of Aldine, Texas, is scary at linebacker. Sammy Davis of Humble, Texas, is one of the nation's top defensive backs, and Ty Warren of Bryan is an

All-American defensive tackle.

3. NEBRASKA

The Cornhuskers struggled at the end but still managed a top 20 class by signing some of the top athletes in the country. Shaun Coleman of Aurora, Colo., is a 210-pounder who can run a 4.4. Carl Crawford of Houston Davis and Jammal Lord of Bayonne, N.J., are both quarterback prospects who could play any skill position. The Huskers will sweat major league baseball with Crawford. All-American running back Josh Davis of Loveland, Colo., is a breakaway threat. The Huskers grabbed talent from Missouri in rush ends Spencer Owen of Carrollton and John Garrison of Blue Springs. All-American fullback Judd Davies of Millard North led an outstanding group out of the home state.

4. KANSAS STATE

The Wildcats will pin their future hopes at quarterback on Ell Roberson of Baytown (Lee), Texas, one of the top three in Texas. Kansas State was successful in the junior college ranks, with defensive tackle Mario Fatafehi of Snow,



Utah, defensive end Cliff Holloman of Garden City, Kan., and running back Joe Hall of Palamar, Calif. The Wildcats signed seven junior college players. Danny Morris of Tulsa Union is the best running back in Oklahoma, and LeRoy Bias of Aurora, Colo., switched from Colorado to Kansas State.

5. OKLAHOMA STATE

The Cowboys finally beat the Sooners for the state's top player in Spiro's Chris Massey. Massey is rated as one of the top 20 players in the country. Elbert Craig of



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Oklahoma City Millwood is also an All-American. Top 100 junior college stars Brian Blackwood of Neo, Okla., and Alvin Porter of Fort Scott, Kan., will start immediately. The Pokes signed eight junior college players in all. Quarterbacks Aso Pogi of Lawton, Okla., and Ben Bowling of Jenks, Okla., took care of a need. Academics could dilute this class, as at least five Cowboy prep signees may have to go to junior college.

6. OKLAHOMA

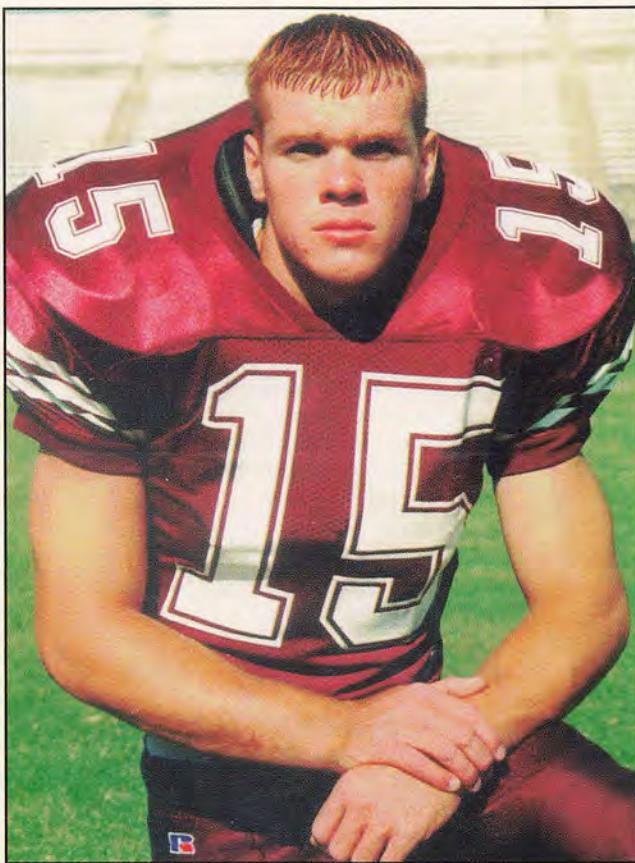
The Sooners took care of their most glaring need at quarterback by signing junior college All-American Josh Heuple of Snow, Utah. All-American Jason White of Tuttle, Okla., top-100 talent Brandon Everage of Granger, Texas, and Chase Williams of Tulsa (Holland Hall), Okla. Jamar Mozee of Blue Springs, Mo., is an All-American running back, Josh Tucker of Moore, Okla., an All-American tight end and Trey Whitlock of Arlington (Sam Houston), Texas, an All-American outside linebacker. The Sooners also signed four much needed defensive tackle prospects.

7. MISSOURI

The Tigers held their own in Missouri, signing 14 athletes, including All-American offensive lineman Rob Droege of St Louis Lindberg and star running backs Taurus Ferguson of St. Charles and Taurean Rollins of Raytown South. Athlete Terrence Curry of Kirkwood, linebacker Sean Doyle of Kansas City Rockhurst, Justin Gage of Jefferson City and offensive lineman Brock Teddlton of Herculaneum are top 10 players in Missouri. Quarterback Darius Outlaw of Powder Springs, Ga., is the Tiger signal caller of the future.

8. IOWA STATE

The Cyclones did not sign many out of Iowa but did sign All-American defensive tackle Casey Shelton of West Des Moines Valley and linebacker Joe Woodley from the same school. Offensive lineman Corey Penn of Roland-Story, Iowa, rounds out the trio. Another Davis is



All-American quarterback Colby Freeman fills a big need for Texas A&M.

headed to Iowa State in the person of Jason Davis out of Miami Southside. Running back Michael Wagner of West Covina, Calif., is only 5-7 but considered one of the best on the West Coast.



Chris Massey picked Oklahoma State.

9. TEXAS TECH

The Red Raiders signed only 15 prospects but reloaded at quarterback with B.J. Symons of Houston Cypress Creek, Mickey Peters of Weatherford, Texas, and Nathan Chandler of Southlake (Carroll), Texas. Lamont Anderson of Irving Nimitz is an excellent defensive tackle prospect, and running back Shaud Williams of Andrews was a top 10 prospect in Texas.

10. KANSAS

Getting running back Reggie Duncan of Killeen Ellison, a top 30 player in Texas, late was a major coup. Linebacker Glenn Robinson of Longmont, Colo., is an excellent linebacker prospect along with Rendell Hendley of Dallas Carter. Quarterback Zach Dyer of Olathe, Kan., has height (6-3) and led his prep squad to a state championship

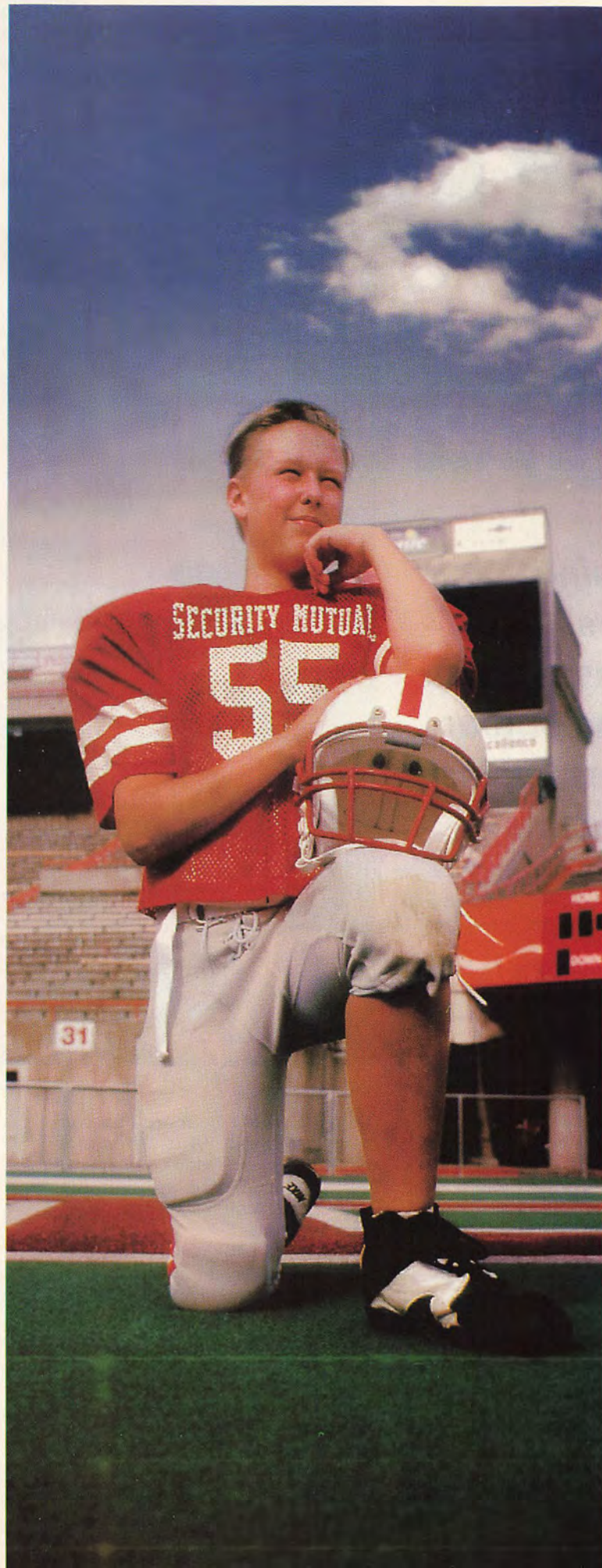
this past year.

11. BAYLOR

A coaching change hurt the Bears, but new coach Kevin Steele shows promise for the future. Defensive end Joe Simmons of Fort Worth (O.D. Wyatt), Texas, and defensive back Derrick Cash of El Campo, Texas, are the headliners. Shane Williams of Springdale, Ark., is one of the top pass receiving tight ends in the country. Williams caught 160 passes and had an amazing 47 touchdowns during his prep career. The Bears really needed to sign wideouts but only signed one.

12. COLORADO

Rick Neuheisel is the most hated man in Colorado. His sudden departure in early January doomed recruiting for new coach Gary Barnett. The Buffs signed only 14 players and lost all major players in Colorado. Offensive lineman Francisco Tipoti of Honolulu, Hawaii, is the top signee. Another offensive lineman Jordan Gehring of American Falls, Idaho, stands 6-7 and weighs 325 pounds. ■



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Rocking The Jayhawks

By Mike Babcock

Nebraska's upset victory against No. 20- and No. 22-ranked Kansas at the Devaney Sports Center in late January ended without the drama that has often attended the series since Jim Kubacki's 15-foot, last-second shot produced a 43-41 upset of Wilt Chamberlain and the Jayhawks in 1958.

There was Bob Moore's half-court shot at the buzzer in overtime to give Nebraska a 66-64 victory in 1979, Beau Reid's game-winning jump shot in a 70-68 victory in 1988 and Jamar Johnson's 3-point shot from the corner at the overtime buzzer for an 81-79 victory at the Sports Center in 1992.

This time, however, Cookie Belcher took the in-bounds pass and held the ball as the final five seconds elapsed in an 84-69 victory. There was no suspense, just the joy of the unexpected.

"This is a big win for the program," said Andy Markowski, who contributed a sizeable amount of emotion and determination to Nebraska's first victory against Kansas in 10 games.

The senior from Ord, Neb., showed no regard for life and limb. At one point, he went sailing over the scorer's table and into the crowd, while attempting to keep the ball from going out-of-bounds. At another, he drove to the basket and powered a slam dunk, while being undercut by a defender.

"I thought I could take it to the

***Surprising
Huskers knock
off Kansas twice
in string of four
victories against
rated teams***

hole, and I got there," he said.

Afterward, he was bruised and battered. Nevertheless, "I feel great," he said.

The Cornhuskers had never defeated Kansas during his time at Nebraska. He was a redshirt for the first two losses of the nine-game streak, and he had played in the remaining seven.

"It's like I just lifted something off my back," Markowski said.

An even greater burden was lifted from coach Danny Nee's back two weeks later when the Cornhuskers defeated Kansas again, at venerable Allen Fieldhouse in Lawrence, 64-59.

The victory was Nee's first at Allen Fieldhouse. Nebraska hadn't won in Lawrence since 1983, when Markowski was 7-years-old and Nee was the head coach at Ohio University.

During a news conference two days before the game, Nee was asked if he were concerned that Kansas was the only former Big Eight school at which he had never won. "If other people were winning

there, it would be more of a concern," he said. "But other than Norm (Stewart) I don't see anyone else going in there and winning. And we certainly have come close a couple of times."

Missouri had defeated Kansas at Lawrence earlier in the season, one of two losses the Jayhawks had suffered at home this season. Iowa also had defeated them there.

"It's like Babe Ruth," said Nee. "When he doesn't hit home runs, he thinks the percentage is going up. I think our percentages are going up. The law of averages says eventually we're going to win there."

"So if I stick around long enough, I'll have a win in Lawrence."





Scott Bruhn

Senior forward Andy Markowski (left) tasted victory against Kansas for the first time in his career at Nebraska Jan. 27 in Lincoln. Markowski and junior guard Cookie Belcher (right), who had 16 points, put the clamps on Jayhawk guard Jeff Boschee.

ings, where the Cornhuskers had not been since January of 1995 when they were No. 19 in the AP poll on consecutive weeks. "I don't think we're at that point yet with our success," he said. "If we keep winning a lot more games, that will take care of itself.

"But I don't think we've earned it (national respect), honestly. I really think we're inching up. We're really positioning ourselves to control our own destiny, to get where we want to go."

Prior to the second Kansas game, Nebraska had a 37 RPI rating and was looking more and more like an NCAA Tournament entrant, as well as a serious challenger for the Big 12 championship.

The second victory against Kansas, the Cornhuskers' fourth in a row against a Top 25 team, again boosted them into a four-way tie for second in the conference, one game behind Texas.

Nee downplayed the possibility of winning a conference title, however, before leaving for Lawrence. Such talk would be inappropriate unless "you're playing in the last two or three games of the season and those games mean the championship," he said. "Until then, it's so premature.

"But I do think the team that wins on Wednesday night certainly is helping themselves toward that because any time you play someone that's either tied with you or ahead of you . . ."

How the Cornhuskers accomplished their dramatic turnaround is "a mystery to me," said Markowski. "Because coming into the season, I thought we were going to be good.

"I think it just took people a while to figure out their roles."

That they had figured out their roles was dramatically illustrated when they upset Oklahoma, which was ranked No. 25 at the time, 96-81 in Norman the week before the first Kansas game.

The Oklahoma victory "kind of cinched it up," Markowski said.

But it wasn't as big as the two against Kansas. The tradition just isn't there. ■

After the Cornhuskers opened conference play with losses to Missouri at Columbia and Texas, there were those who questioned whether Nee ought to be allowed to stick around.

Athletic director Bill Byrne wasn't among them, however.

After the first victory against Kansas, Nebraska moved into a four-way tie for second place in the Big 12, behind surprising Texas, prompting talk of a possible conference title run.

"I'm not comfortable talking about it," Nee said in answer to a question about his team's chances. "That's the farthest thing from my mind. We don't have anything in

the bag, believe me."

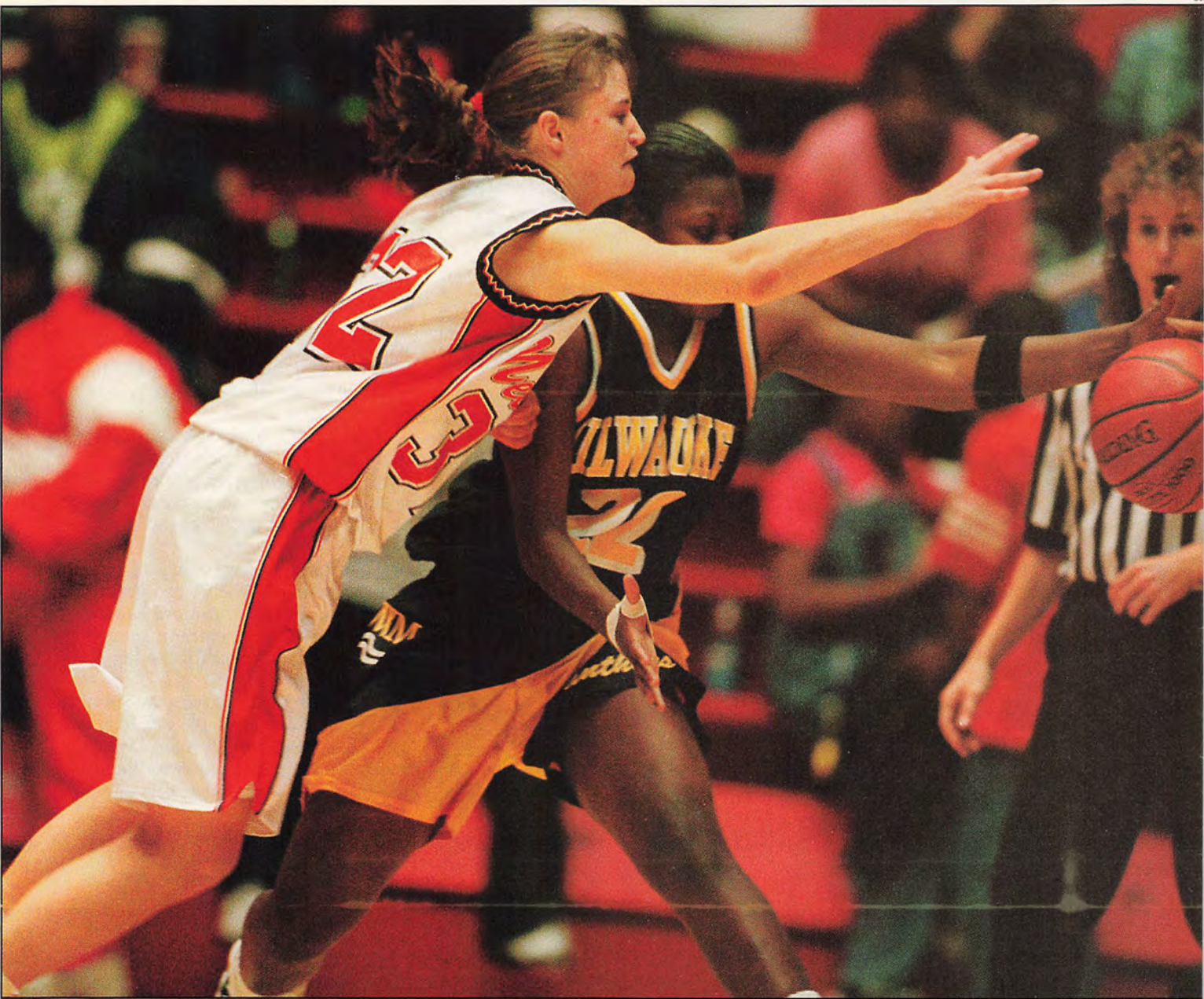
His caution was justified. The euphoria of the victory quickly faded, and the winning streak ended, three nights later in Ames, Iowa, with a 52-47 loss against Iowa State.

"It's not easy to win on the road," Markowski said.

But the Cornhuskers regrouped to win at Colorado then defeated No. 24-ranked Missouri 69-61 at the Sports Center to renew the enthusiasm that followed the first victory against Kansas.

After the Missouri victory, Nebraska received four votes in the Associated Press Top 25.

Nee dismissed talk of the rank-



Stealing The Show

Nicole Kubik scored 36 points against Kansas, but scoring is not the most important thing the junior from Cambridge does for the Nebraska basketball team

By Mike Babcock

Michael Jordan had announced his retirement just three days earlier. So Nicole Kubik's performance might have been, as teammate Brooke Schwartz suggested, "a tribute to Jordan."

Kubik, however, quickly dismissed that explanation.

The Nebraska junior grew up admiring Jordan, all right, "not only his basketball ability, (but also) his character, his personality," the soft-spoken Kubik said.

Nevertheless, Jordan's retirement was not a factor in this case.

"I wasn't even thinking about Jordan," said Kubik. "I don't know what Brooke was talking about. You know when she gets in front of a camera, you can never tell what she's going to say."

Kubik smiled. "No. It wasn't Jordan," she said.

What it was was a Jordan-like effort by Kubik in the Huskers' surprisingly one-sided, 82-62 victory against then No. 23-ranked Kansas at the Devaney Sports Center in mid-January.

Kubik scored 36 points, including 25 in the first half. She had eight rebounds. She made eight steals and six assists. And she set school records by making 16 free throws in 18 attempts.

She was pretty much off the chart based on Coach Paul Sanderford's system of evaluation. Kubik's grade was "astronomically high, between 140 and 160," Sanderford said. "Anybody who grades between 50 and 60 normally is an all-conference player. Give you an example, Michael Jordan, last year in the NBA, would have graded about 94 or 95 for the season the way we grade."

"What can I say? She did everything. I think she swept the floor at halftime."

OK. So Kubik didn't sweep the floor after outscoring Kansas by one during the first 20 minutes. But she would have if Sanderford had told her to do so because she's very coachable.

Even though the career-high 36 points boosted her season's scoring average to just under 20 points per game, "scoring is not the most important thing she does for us," said Sanderford.

In fact, against Kansas "I was more impressed with her defense," he said. "I thought she made us go defensively. She was very active, both in our half-court trap and in



Nicole Kubik grew up as the next-to-youngest among seven brothers and sisters.

our man-to-man.

"The most impressive stat was seven defensive rebounds for a point guard.

"She gave us eight possessions with steals and eight possessions with offensive and defensive rebounding. Sixteen possessions by one player; that's a lot of times to get the basketball."

A coach appreciates such things. But most in an enthusiastic crowd of 5,762 left the Sports Center discussing Kubik's 36 points, the fourth-highest single-game total in Husker history.

Despite discounting Schwartz's theory, Kubik offered no better explanation for the outburst.

"I was telling people after the game, I really couldn't remember what was going on that first half," Kubik said two days later. "I told some people just today that I couldn't remember what Coach said after the game. I was like: Do we have practice? I couldn't remember if we had practice today or not."

"I didn't know if he (Sanderford) really said anything (afterward)."

The 36 points weren't an aberration, obviously. Kubik averaged 13.2 points per game last season. With her eighth point against Kansas, she became the 18th player in Husker history to score 1,000 for her career. And only 11 of the others reached 1,000 points in three or fewer seasons.

Even so, Kubik might well be overlooked in a scoring-police lineup. She probably wouldn't be rounded up with the usual suspects because she's so "unassuming" — Sanderford's word.

"Nicole is not a very vocal person," he said. "But at the same time, she leads by example. The kids

respect her game. They respect how hard she goes about it. She's just a great kid and wants everybody to like her. Sometimes as a leader you have to get on people. It's tough for her to do that."

The skills that have earned her teammates' respect can be traced to a driveway on the family farm in Cambridge, Neb., where she grew up the next-to-youngest among seven brothers and sisters.

Her affection and affinity for basketball were established long before she had an opportunity to play it on an organized basis in the seventh grade. The Morris and Cathy Kubik home is on a farm, "so it wasn't easy to go into town, especially when I was younger and couldn't drive," said Nicole.

"It was a lot easier just to stay out in my driveway and shoot around."

The outdoor court consisted of a goal and "a little paved spot, kind of, that we shot on," she said. "Actually, it was pretty limited. At the top of the key, it was dirt. It was lower than the rest of the pavement, so we pretty much had to stay in close, just to start out with."

The goal was "about" regulation, 10-feet high, Kubik said. "It was actually an inch higher, I think. It was something my brother made. He didn't measure it too good, I don't think."

Often, a solitary Kubik shot baskets at the goal. Sometimes there were spirited pick-up games involving brothers and sisters, two-on-two, three-on-three. And sometimes, there were games of H-O-R-S-E involving sister Jami, who preceded her at Nebraska, and younger brother Colin.

"I got some bad habits just throwing up some sloppy shots, trying to get them over the top of him, underneath him or any way I could," said Nicole. Colin has grown to 6-foot-6.

Despite having two years on her, sister Jami provided the best match-up.

"Jami is the queen of weird shots, I guess," Nicole said of their games of H-O-R-S-E. "Left-handed shots, behind the backboard, those were some of the main ones we'd try, hook shots."

"Any time we got to playing, we'd laugh a lot. So that was tough."

"It was kind of, whoever laughed the least would win."

Basketball has always been fun for Kubik, who finished her career at Cambridge High as the second-leading scorer in Nebraska prep girls

history, with 2,179 points. She was a four-time all-state selection, playing on state championship teams as a freshman, sophomore and junior.

Cambridge was a combined 94-3, with an 81-game winning streak.

Kubik quickly went from being known "because of my brothers and sisters" to establishing herself as someone unique in the athletic family to which she says she owes her success.

She had to assert herself, as the second-youngest. And she learned the game from her brothers and sisters, by emulation as well as by constructive criticism. "Family members aren't afraid to tell you what you're doing wrong," she said. "And you won't take it the wrong way."

The 5-foot-10 Kubik isn't physically imposing. It appears a stiff prairie breeze might be sufficient to put her off-balance. But she's athletic, and intensely competitive, another siblings' benefit.

"I've always been competitive with them," she said. "I never wanted to back down from anything they challenged me to. I might go out and lose a game, but I'll want to play again until I can win. Mostly in sports I'm that way. In other aspects

of life, I wouldn't say I'm overly competitive."

When the family gets together for the holidays and plays cards — pitch is a favorite — Nicole sets aside the competitiveness that earned her third-team All-Big 12 recognition last season.

The important thing then is that everyone have fun.

Nothing is more fun for her than playing basketball, however. And "right now, I'm having the most fun I've probably ever had playing basketball," she said.

She has unquestionably succeeded Anna DeForge as the Huskers' most prominent player, a designation with which she seemed uncomfortable following the performance against Kansas.

"I think our entire team has taken on the role of stepping up when we need to," she said.

"It just so happened this last game was my time to step up and take on some responsibility. I really don't feel any pressure that I have to score points or that I have to do anything."

Even though she's a captain, her role hasn't changed significantly this season.

"Technically, it's a lot the same," said Kubik. "Last year, my big role was to be the floor leader, to get people involved, kind of run the show. It's the same this year, a lot."

"I think probably even more so this year, taking on the leadership role of getting people in the right spots, making sure we're in the right offense according to their defense and stuff like that."

And when the opportunity presents itself, as in the Kansas game, Kubik's responsibility is to score.

She had no idea the points were mounting as they were, however. "If you would have asked me how many points I had the first half, I would have said 10 or 12, not 25," she said.

"I just go out and play. If the ball goes in, it goes in. I am a little conscious of whether the ball's going in or not. If I miss 20 shots, I know I missed 20 shots. I realize if I'm making or missing some."

The cliché is, Kubik was unconscious on offense against Kansas.

Schwartz claimed it was because Jordan had retired. Kubik said not.

But then, she couldn't remember much of what happened that night, anyway. ■

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RIM SHOTS

Notes And Quotes From The Basketball World

13,135 SEE NEBRASKA-IOWA STATE WOMEN'S GAME

The Nebraska women's basketball team held on to defeat No. 15-ranked Iowa State 68-67 at the Devaney Sports Center in early February. That was the most significant thing.

"We held serve at home," coach Paul Sanderford said of the Huskers' 27th consecutive victory at the Sports Center. (They had yet to lose there under Sanderford's direction.)

Of nearly equal significance, however, was the size of the crowd that watched the Sunday afternoon game, nationally televised on the Fox network. Attendance was 13,135, setting both a Nebraska and Big 12 Conference record. It also was the second-highest attendance at the Sports Center for basketball this season. The Cornhusker men's 84-69 upset victory against Kansas drew 13,680.

"It was a great atmosphere," said Sanderford. "It's what we've talked about since I came to the University of Nebraska. I think the people were entertained. I think at the same time, they had a good time."

"It was just great for basketball in general, especially women's basketball."

State Farm Insurance purchased 20,000 tickets for the game and gave them away, contributing to the record attendance. "Granted, State Farm gave away a bunch of tickets," Sanderford said.

"But they could have stayed home and watched it on TV, anywhere in the state of Nebraska or really anywhere, I guess. But they chose to come, and I think that's really a statement for the fans."

In addition, the Huskers were in a slump, having lost five of their previous seven games.

"The way we struggled recently, it's real easy for people to not come," said Sanderford.



Nebraska coach Paul Sanderford said large crowds make for a great atmosphere.

NO. 1 VS. NO. 2 WOMEN'S MATCHUP NOT SHOWN LOCALLY

The No. 1 versus No. 2 matchup in mid-January between the Connecticut and Tennessee women's teams was televised nationally by CBS. But the CBS affiliates in Lincoln and Omaha opted to carry the Nebraska men's basketball game against Texas that Sunday afternoon.

"I'm not upset at all," Sanderford said. "I'm kind of glad they didn't show them in here. They've got enough exposure. It's good that our men's game was on. Why give Tennessee and Connecticut anything else? I mean, really, that's my feeling. My wife was a little upset. But if our men are playing, I'd much prefer to have our men's game on. They get enough exposure on the East Coast."

"It was good for women's basketball and probably would have been good to have on. But at the same time, we're from Nebraska. Let's publicize Nebraska a little bit. We have to focus on Nebraska."

"Now if that had been us pre-empted, I would have been irritated."

MEN'S RECRUITING CLASS DRAWS GOOD REVIEWS

At a recent weekly news conference, men's coach Danny Nee said the Cornhuskers were "in the midst of our best recruiting year ever." Clark Francis, writing in the January issue of Basketball Times, included Nebraska among his top 65 fall recruiting classes. The Cornhuskers were No. 35.

Nebraska's fall signees were 6-foot-6 Steffon Bradford, 6-foot-8 Kenny Booker and 6-foot-10 Brian Conklin. Bradford was listed as a small forward, Booker and Conklin as power forwards.

The Omaha World-Herald reported that Danny Walker, a point guard from Compton, Calif., Community College has made an oral commitment to Nebraska and will sign a letter of intent in April. Walker and Bradford were teammates on the California junior college championship team. ■

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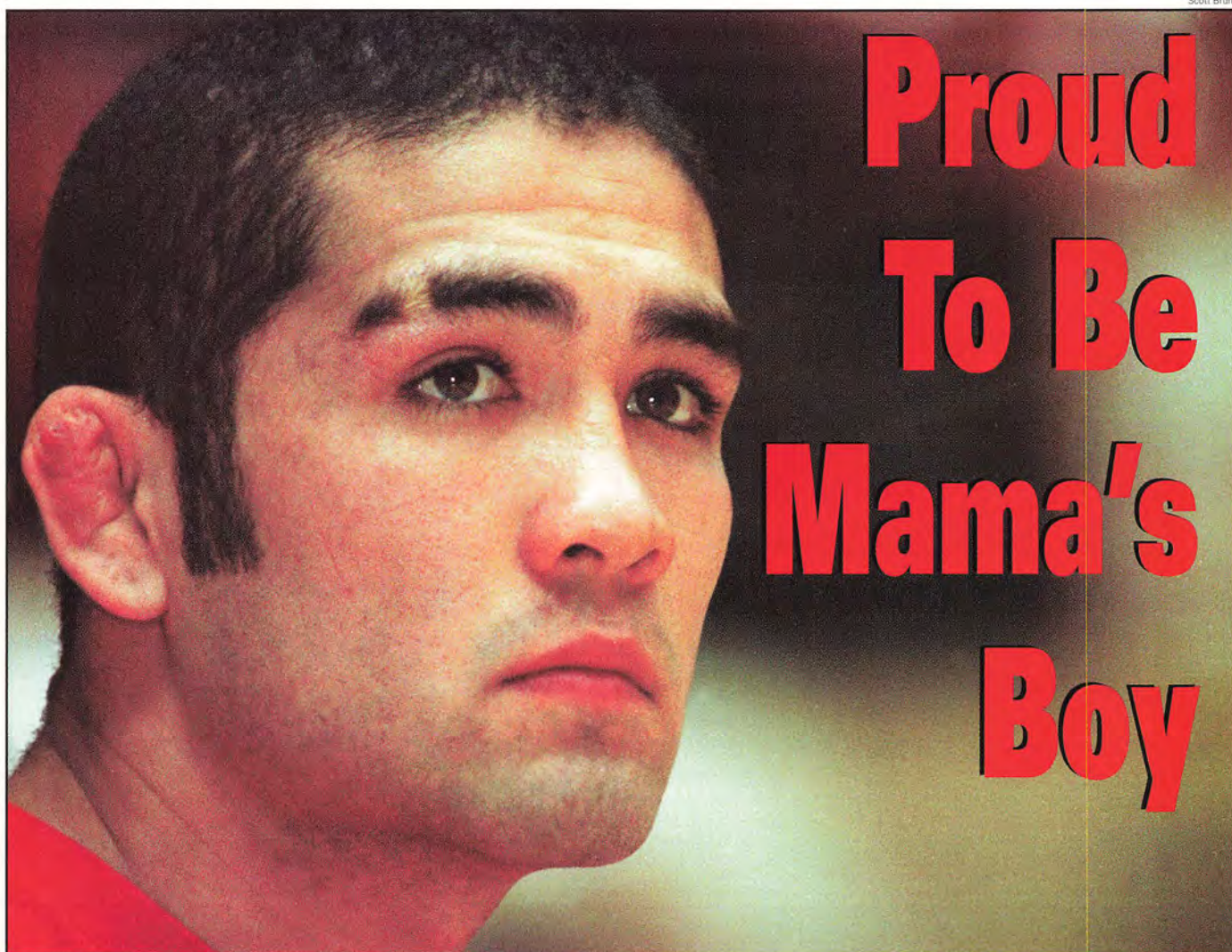
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Proud To Be Mama's Boy

***Nebraska's Paul Gomez is proof
you can't judge a wrestler by his cover***

By Steve Sipple

Nebraska wrestling coach Tim Neumann admits he was uncertain just what he had gotten himself into by recruiting Paul Gomez, a slick-styled junior college national champion from California.

Gomez arrived on the Nebraska campus in August 1997, Neumann recalls, "with half his (black) hair dyed blond, and half of it not. Half his eyebrows dyed, half not. Half his goatee dyed, half not."

"Maybe it was normal for where he was from," Neumann said. "But it wasn't normal in Lincoln (Neb.)."

Nebraska assistant coach Jason

Kelber took a long look at Gomez's hip-hop, MTV-generation style and thought, "OK, here's our Callie boy from the barrio."

The things Neumann and Kelber would soon learn about Gomez speak to the danger of the human tendency to judge people based solely on appearance. Neumann's new silent pledge may well be, "Thou shall never judge a wrestler by his cover." Because the Nebraska coaches would soon see Gomez doting on his mother, Graciela Gutierrez, when she visited Lincoln, Neb., from Gomez's native Castroville, Calif. Gomez would open doors for her,

always insist she sit in the front seat.

"I'm a mama's boy," Gomez, a 125-pound junior, declares proudly.

This season the Husker coaches have watched Gomez embrace a primary leadership role for a young-but-talented Nebraska squad. Gomez was troubled last season by what he perceived as a lack of team unity. So Gomez and teammate Jose DeAnda devised a plan to award T-shirts after Friday practices to wrestlers who worked particularly hard throughout the week. The T-shirts read: Together Everyone Achieves More.

And during those first few weeks

in Lincoln, the coaches couldn't have guessed what Gomez describes as his "biggest goal."

"I just want to walk on that stage and pick up my diploma," Gomez said. "Nobody in my family has ever gone to college."

Alas, Gomez understands his coaches' initial concerns when he arrived in Lincoln.

"People tell me all the time, 'You're not what you look like,'" Gomez said. "I wish people would just talk to me and see what kind of person I really am."

Neumann always has had a handle on what Gomez could give Nebraska on the mat — a wrestler with above-average technique, smooth movement and, maybe above all, a heart the size of his home state.

Gomez's body is another story. If his heart is California, his upper body is Rhode Island.

"When Paul takes off his warmup, people kind of laugh," Neumann said last season. "But Paul's quick and he's tough."

Competing for Lassen (Calif.) Community College, Gomez captured the National Junior College Athletic Association 118-pound championship in 1996 before redshirting the next season at Lassen and transferring to Nebraska for the 1997-98 season.

Gomez finished 19-13 in his first season in Division I. He wound up fourth in a loaded weight class at the Big 12 Championships and then went 1-2 at the NCAA Championships.

This season, Gomez was 10-2 and ranked No. 6 nationally in late January.

"This year, the bottom line is that we expect him to finish as an All-American," Kelber, the Husker assistant coach, said. "Next year, he could win it all. Right now I'm not sure if he's physically strong enough. Technically, he has great stuff. He's really slick. Put a little strength with that, and he's unbeatable."

Kelber said Gomez's lack of strength contributes to the nagging injuries that have slowed him at Nebraska. The injuries, in turn, keep Gomez from uninterrupted periods of training and weight-lifting. It becomes a cycle.

But Gomez's heart and determination push him forward. He says he daydreams in class about what

moves he will use to avenge losses.

"I'll be sitting there thinking, 'If he gets hold of my leg, this is what I'm going to do,'" Gomez said. "Pretty soon, the whole class will go by, and I'll be like, 'Damn, I wasn't paying attention.'"

Gomez reminds himself that he can't slack off in the classroom. He wants to remain on track to graduate in May of 2000. This time, he wants to wear the cap and gown and be handed his diploma with everyone else. He missed that chance at North Monterey County High.

Gomez said he hated high school. He fell behind and received his diploma only after finishing summer classes.

But his perseverance pleased his mother, who was born in Mexico (Paul was born in Watsonville, Calif.). When he was in grade school, Gomez recalls, his mother would take him and his sister, Lupe, to work in the strawberry and raspberry fields on the California Coast during summers. Gomez said his mother wanted to show her children the pitfalls of hard labor and use the experiences to help inspire them to become educated.

The prickly branches scratched their arms. Gomez said his mother still has a bad back from the work.

Gomez remembers toiling in fear that immigration officials would raid the fields and deport his mother (she has since acquired U.S. citizenship).

"She would tell us, 'Hide in the bush, and don't worry if I get picked up — I'll have someone come and get you,'" Gomez recalls.

Gomez's eyes glisten when he discusses his mom. He tells of the time in high school when he failed to make the required weight for a tournament. His friends turned their backs on him. His coaches didn't allow him to attend the tournament. But his mother stood by his side.

"She made me feel like I didn't need anybody else," he said. "It all dawned on me that day. It hit me like a punch."

Gomez looks toward the floor when he is asked about the adjustment he faced coming to Lincoln from California. His demeanor tells you it's obvious the transition has been tough at times.

"People are just different here — they can be nice or they can be



Paul Gomez finished 19-13 in his first season in Division I after winning a National Junior College Athletic Association championship in 1996.

mean," he said. "But here, when you look at someone, you don't have to worry whether you're looking at them the wrong way."

Gomez thinks he still leaves some people with the wrong impression.

"It's just different cultures, and people are afraid — I'm afraid," he said.

Neumann doesn't ask Gomez to conform to "the Nebraska way of life." Yet the coach said he does see Gomez making small changes toward conformity.

"He's just a really down-to-earth nice kid," Kelber says of Gomez. "He loves his mom. Family values are big for him. He treats nobody badly. I just love him as a kid." ■

10 QUESTIONS

With volleyball All-American Nancy Meendering

What's your reaction to being named a first team All-American?

"It's something you always hope for. People will tell you you'll get it and people will tell you you won't. But it's a nice surprise when it does happen. I'm very excited."

After playing behind Reitsma in 1997, when did you first believe you had what it takes to be an All-American?

"Last year, when I got playing time, I was super excited, but I felt like I was still battling against this huge player. In the spring last year, Lisa was gone, so then I felt like I could step into the role. I feel like I came into my own."



You're both from the same hometown (Hull, Iowa), you went to the same high school (Western Christian) and you play the same position right-side hitter). Do the similarities ever scare you?

"Ever since she was a senior in high school, I've always wanted to be like her. She's only been a role-model and a hero to me so to be able to follow in her footsteps is just an honor."

There are so many similarities with the two of you, what's the biggest difference?

"I feel like I play louder. Coach has talked to me about it. He wants me to be a vocal, dominant, very aggressive player."

Coach Terry Pettit is very demanding. What's it been like playing for him?

"He just has a serious nature about him that intensifies his intimidation. He can smile too, but for the most part, he's serious. When we come into practice, he comes in to get the job done. That keeps us focused as well."

You must have spent your whole life dreaming of this?

"Really I didn't get hooked on volleyball until my sophomore year in high school when I started being able to play better. My freshman year was probably the first that I was the tallest in my class."

If you weren't that interested in volleyball as a child, what did you do with your spare time?

"I swam in grade school. Volleyball and basketball, when they started in the seventh and the eighth grade, were really just things that just took time away from swimming. After seventh and eighth grade, I knew I would have to drive to Sioux City to be on a high school swim team. For my parents it just wasn't financially feasible, so I decided to drop swimming and try the other sports and see how it went."

What do you remember most about your days as a swimmer?

"Somebody told me I still have some records at the little pool where I lived. That's kind of neat."

Your name is pronounced MAINE-der-ing, but some of your teammates call you "Meanderthal." Where did your nickname come from?

"It came from one of my friends. He just started calling me that just to tease me. Kind of like "You're just this big ogre." I don't mind. It's funny."

Where can you improve before next season?

"I just have to make better decisions. We have to go to work in the spring and try to come out next fall as good as ever." ■

— Todd Henrichs

NewsBits

NEBRASKA VOLLEYBALL TEAM ADDS FOUR RECRUITS

Nebraska volleyball coach Terry Pettit announced that four prep athletes, including two from the state of Nebraska, have signed National Letters of Intent to attend the University of Nebraska and play volleyball for the Huskers next season.

Nebraska's newest recruits are Amber Holmquist, a 6-foot-4 middle blocker from Houston, Texas, Laura Pilakowski, a 6-1 middle blocker/outside hitter from Columbus High School, Greichaly Cepero, a 6-2 setter from Dorado, Puerto Rico, and Lindsay Wischmeier, a 5-9 setter from Lewiston High School.

"I think we have a very strong class," Pettit said. "Athletically, they are exceptional and will help fill some immediate needs. We recruited very specifically to what our needs are. That's why we recruited two setters. They are great athletes and have the talent and mental toughness to make an immediate contribution to our program."

"In order to maintain a high level of play from year to year, you have to replace your quality athletes with the same caliber of players. Fiona Nepo, Megan Korver, Jaime Krondak and Denise Koziol were outstanding players, and I think this group has the potential to be good as well."

Holmquist joins the Huskers after starting for the U.S. Junior National Team. She was named the 1998 All-Greater Houston Player of the Year after leading Alief Hastings High School to the state semifinals.

Columbus High School standout Pilakowski will give the Huskers an added offensive force at middle blocker or outside hitter. Pilakowski earned All-America honors as a member of the Nebraska Junior Club Team.

Cepero, a native of Dorado, Puerto Rico, attends McDonogh High School in Owings Mills, Md., as a senior exchange student. She had a stellar year, earning the 1998 Gatorade Circle of Champions Maryland High School Volleyball Player of the Year award after leading McDonogh High School to a 22-2 record and the Association of Independent Schools regular season championship and tournament championship match.

Wischmeier, a 5-9 setter from Burchard, led Lewiston High School to three Class D-2 state championship appearances, including state titles in 1995 and 1997.

ASSISTANT NOTH RESIGNS

Nebraska Head Volleyball Coach Terry Pettit announced that 10-year assistant coach Cathy Noth will resign from her duties effective March 1. Noth said she is resigning to take a break from the demanding schedule and to pursue personal interests.

Noth has been a fixture in the Husker volleyball program as a coach and a player since 1981 and has played a key role in establishing Nebraska's tradition at the setter position. Noth, Nebraska's first All-America setter, led the Huskers to four consecutive Big Eight titles from 1981 to 1984 and was a part of the first Husker team to participate in the NCAA Tournament, beginning a string of 17 straight appearances.

Noth was also Nebraska's first three-time All-Big Eight selection and was the only volleyball player in the history of the conference to earn three Big Eight Tournament Most Valuable Performer awards.

SOCCER TEAM SIGNS SEVEN

Soccer coach John Walker announced a seven-player recruiting class that could give the Huskers the most talent and depth in school history during the 1999 season.

Highlighting the list of Husker recruits is the 1998 Missouri High School Player of the Year, the 1997 Colorado High School Player of the Year, and two of the top contenders for 1999 player-of-the-year honors in Kansas and Nebraska, along with three of the top players in the Canadian National Team program.

Kori Saunders carries one of the most impressive lists of credentials in the 1999 recruiting class after earning state and Kansas City metro area player-of-the-year honors as a junior in 1998.

Michelle Culbertson captured Colorado Player-of-the-Year accolades at Horizon High School in Thornton, Colo., as a sophomore in 1997.

Paige Phillips is the only recruit from the state of Nebraska in the 1999 class. Phillips led Millard North to a state title as a sophomore in 1997 and a Class A runner-up finish in 1998.

Brooke Jones is a club soccer teammate of Saunders with Alliance United in Kansas City.

In addition to signing the top players in Midwest, Walker and the Huskers also have continued the flow of players from Canada. Breanna Boyd, Christine Latham and Cindy Walsh are all active with the Canadian National Team program and give the Huskers eight Canadians on the 1999 roster. ■

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High School.

Oops. The pass was intercepted by another player in a No. 12 jersey.

Solich corrected himself. The quarterback in the clip wasn't Blomeier. The defensive back was. "I'm glad it's not him (at quarterback)," Solich said. Those watching laughed.

Sometimes it's difficult to identify players on videotape, particularly when the quality of the tape is poor — which, by the way, it wasn't in this case. But even the highest quality videotape, expertly edited, has limitations when identifying a player and, more importantly, evaluating his ability.

That wasn't a problem with Blomeier, however, because the Nebraska coaches were able to work with him for three-and-a-half days at their Big Red Football Camp in Lincoln last June.

They know he's fast because he "timed extremely well in the 40," said Solich. They have a sense of his work ethic and his demeanor. So he won't be an unknown quantity when he reports in the fall.

The same is true of 14 others among Nebraska's 22 scholarship recruits this year. Most of the in-state recruits have been to more than one camp. Phil Peetz from Elkhorn has been to four. Tim Green from Omaha Westside has been to three, as has Judd Davies from Millard North.

The only athletes who haven't been to a Cornhusker summer camp are Carl Crawford, Jammal Lord, Tonia Fonoti, Tamotu Tagoa'i, Dan Waldrop, John Garrison and Larry Henderson.

Distance was a significant factor for Fonoti and Tagoa'i. They're from Hawaii. But even distance isn't always a factor. Patrick Kabongo came to camp last June. And he's from Canada.

Actually, Kabongo is from Zaire. French is his first language, English his second. He moved to Canada when he was 4-years-old and has played organized football for only three years. But he has extraordinary size and athletic ability, which the Cornhusker coaches have seen first-hand.

Without that association, Nebraska might have been reluctant to offer a scholarship. The limits are 85 scholarships maximum and 25 maximum in a given year. So there is no margin for error.

The summer camp experience "I think has become very,

very important," Solich said. "It's probably important for almost all universities out there . . . you know what you're getting. You have a pretty good idea. You've seen them run. You've seen them jump. You've been able to time them.

"You've been able to see their personalities and to get a first-hand view as to what you might be getting in that regard. And so that's tremendously valuable, of course.

"And then along with the fact you know exactly what you're getting, you have a chance to get them here on campus. They see your facilities. They get around your coaches, to where they get a good feel for the coaching staff here, what is here, and from that you have a better chance to recruit them."

In capsules released by the sports information office on letter-of-intent signing day, Blomeier is quoted: "I had a great time at the Nebraska football camp and really got to know the coaches. It's a great atmosphere, and I liked the way the coaches acted — in a professional and honest manner."

The recruiting advantages from such an experience should be obvious.

Robin Miller came to camp. He made the long trip from Kent, Wash.

The 5-foot-11, 220-pound Miller "showed up with the defensive backs (in camp)," Solich said. He showed some potential there, but he didn't really have the look of a defensive back.

By camp's end, the coaches projected him as either an outside linebacker or a running back. "We thought he could go either way (offense or defense) initially," said Solich.

"He had an excellent senior year at I-back," however, rushing for 1,726 yards and 16 touchdowns — he rushed for 264 yards and three touchdowns in one game. And he was chosen as the state's "Gatorade Player of the Year," earning SuperPrep All-America honors as a running back.

So that's where he'll begin his college career.

"He could be a linebacker if you wanted him to. He's a big, tough, aggressive football player," said Solich. "He could be a fullback if you wanted him to. But when you turn the film on and you watch his running style, he reminds me a lot of having the same style that Mike Rozier had."

Solich quickly qualified that, not wanting to put undue pressure on Miller. "I don't want to say Robin is (another) Mike Rozier," he said. "But Robin's running style is much like Mike Rozier's."

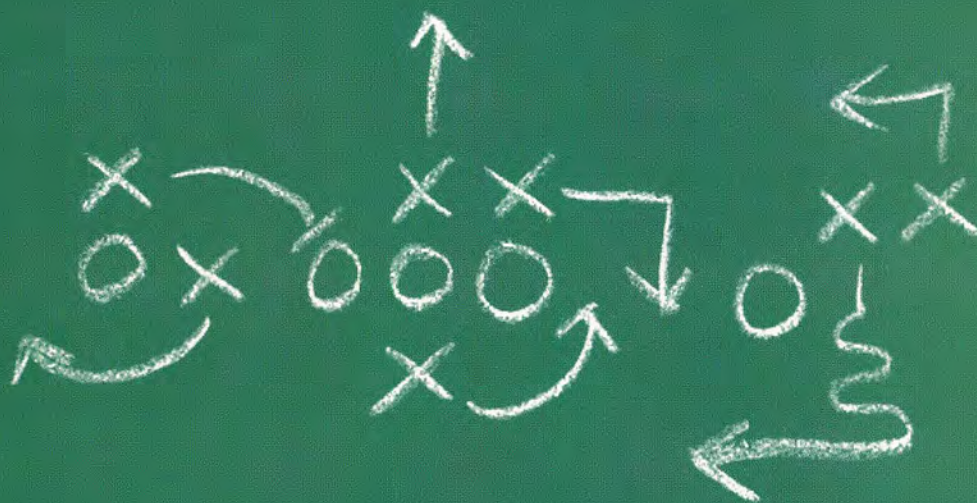
The videotape highlights of Miller verified that. The player Solich identified with the red-dot pointer was an impressive ball carrier, a powerful runner. It was no stretch to imagine Rozier.

The player deftly pulled in what would have been an errant pitch, drawing praise from Solich, and cut up field into would-be, but physically overmatched, tacklers. It was Miller, no question.

And the good thing is, the Cornhuskers had more to go on than just those images. ■



**This No. 12 is Rob
Blomeier.**



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